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Community involvement in the context of population aging: individual, community, and age group-level analyses

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**Community involvement in the context of population aging:
Individual-, community-, and age group-level analyses**

by

Kyong Hee Chee

**A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

Major: Sociology

Major Professors: Vernon D. Ryan and Terry L. Besser

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2001

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The aging of a population means that a population, as a unit of observation, is getting older, and population aging may be measured in terms of the proportion of persons aged 65 and over (Seigel 1993). According to the 1990 U.S. census, people who were 65 years old or older totaled 31.2 million, constituting 12.5 percent of the national population. As the baby boom generation represented by those born between 1946 and 1964 reaches retirement age, the growth of the population aged 65 and over is expected to accelerate rapidly. The number of people aged 65 and over is projected to reach 69.4 million, or 20 percent of the projected national population, by 2030.

Given this forecast, most communities will see their elderly population increase, at least relatively (Morrison 1990). The increase is expected to be highly variable at local levels and consequences will differ widely from place to place (Morrison 1990:404). Earlier research in the last century discussed spatial concentrations of older people left behind in rural areas and inner cities as large numbers of young people moved (Riley 1985). During the 1960s, however, elderly migrants led the movement from metropolitan to nonmetropolitan areas, and by the 1980s, some U.S. counties were experiencing high rates of elderly migrants, which increased more rapidly than rates of departure of younger ones (Riley 1985).

Scholars have documented various implications of population aging. Many researchers, with an assumption that older people are the dependents of society, focus on society's increasing need for the care of the elderly. An alternative assumption would be to emphasize the capacities of the elderly that can be utilized for the benefit of society. For example, Morris and Caro (1995) assert that the growing proportion of retirees in the total population represents an

opportunity to address the current crisis in community problem-solving. In spite of the optimism in this idea, there is little literature examining what and how the older segment of the population, in fact, contributes to local society.

It is rather surprising that the topic of elderly community involvement has not attracted more serious attention from researchers, considering the clear empirical evidence that older generations are generally more involved in the political process than younger ones (Miller and Shanks 1996). For example, Putnam (1995) notes that Americans' direct engagement in politics and government has decreased steadily and sharply over the last generation. Decreases in voter turnouts over time represent the continuing replacement of older generation voters with younger generations who demonstrate much lower political involvement. According to Miller and Shanks' (1996) research, the post-New Deal generations, whose first vote took place in 1968 or later, had much lower political involvement and voting turnout compared to the New Deal generation, whose first vote occurred between 1932 and 1964. Such empirical evidence points to a possibility that today's elders in general are more actively engaged in the political process compared to their younger counterparts. One can even surmise that a higher proportion of the elderly population is related to a more active involvement in a community as a whole. This plausible relationship on a local level, however, has not yet been studied. Population aging deserves closer inspection as it is considered an increasingly important characteristic of communities. One way to understand the potential effect of population aging on communities is to examine generational differences.

It is posited that the elderly are likely to differ from the younger in their attitudes and actions partly because of their differential exposure to significant events. For example, generational differences in political involvement are in part attributable to different historical and social experiences that generations have had at different points in their life course. The New Deal generation generally coincides with the World II generation, whom Tom Brokaw (1998) calls "The

Greatest Generation," generalized as being more patriotic. People in the New Deal generation would have experienced The Great Depression most likely as a teenager and World War II most likely as a young adult; those in the post-New Deal generations, including the so-called baby boom generations experienced neither. Given such generational differences in experiences and political behaviors, there might be some significant relationships between the characteristics of older as opposed to younger generations and the patterns of their respective community involvement. However, there is no empirical knowledge as to what kinds of generational attributes predict the extent of community involvement by old as opposed to young groups of community members.

Although old and young generations may differ in their age-based attributes, it is important to recognize that they share the same geographic and social context when residing in the same community. Nevertheless, the effect of place on older or younger generations' patterns of community involvement is not established.

As commonly used, the term "generation" has been used thus far to designate individuals who share the similar year of birth and therefore have similar life experiences. Given the cross-sectional nature of the present research, however, the term "age group" will be used from here on instead of generation because an age group refers to an aggregate of individuals who are of similar age at a particular time (Riley 1976:196). When dealing with cross-sectional data, gerontologists as well as demographers often group the elderly population by distinguishing younger elderly from older elderly. For example, "the aged" usually refer to those who are 75 years old or older (Seigel 1993). Morris and Caro (1995) call those aged 55 to 64 the "near old" and those aged 65 to 74 the "young old." Largely based on such common practices, three age groups will be discussed in the present study: a group of community members who are 55 to 74 will be called the Young-Old Group (a combination of the near

old and the young old), those 75 or more as the Old-Old Group, and a group of community members from 18 to 54 as the Young Group. Reasons for these groupings will be elaborated further in the Methods chapter.

Research Objectives

The purpose of the present study is to understand better characteristics associated with community involvement by individuals, communities, and age groups. A general definition of community involvement will be found in the next section. The study will attempt to illuminate how residents in rural communities, small cities, and metropolitan areas in a Midwestern state get involved in locality-based projects, why these communities vary in the extent of their mobilization for community improvement, and how the Old-Old, Young-Old, and Young Groups from these communities were involved in community work in the early 1990s.

To meet the study's purpose, four research objectives have been formulated. The first objective is to identify factors causing individuals' involvement in community work. Factors considered include sociodemographic characteristics such as household income, homeownership, marital status, children in the household, and age. How an individual's local ties in the community may influence individual community involvement also will be examined. Another question pursued is whether or not the place in which one lives affects one's community involvement.

The second objective is to seek explanations for why some communities experience higher levels of mobilization than other communities. In this regard, place-specific attributes of a community as a whole will be identified. The place-specific characteristics examined include population size, population aging, and density of acquaintanceships.

Another objective is to identify factors affecting an age group's level of community involvement. It will be determined whether age group itself or the

type of place where an age group resides are influential factors. Additionally, how an age group's local ties are associated with the age group's level of community involvement will be analyzed.

The final objective involves the implications of the research findings on policy issues.

The Dependent Variable Defined

In the present study, "community involvement," is defined as voluntary participation of residents in projects intended to produce a communitywide common good. There are at least four components to this definition. First, community involvement is treated as an act, rather than as an attitude or sentiment. The second component of the definition is its public purpose or intent that results in the production of a common good rather than a private good. The public purpose is distinguished from personal motivations based on self-interest. Third, community involvement is conceptualized as being place-oriented in the sense that community represents the locality where members reside. Community involvement thus becomes an action by people who share a common geographic space as their place of daily living. Finally, community involvement pertains to voluntarism on the part of resident action. In other words, action is not forced nor directly motivated by material compensation, but instead by some form of altruism. Stated differently, community involvement is understood as the willing action of community members in locality-based projects intended to benefit the community as a whole.

Uniqueness of the Study

There are at least three ways that this study can make a unique contribution to the literature. The first is that the research builds on the positive

assumption regarding the roles of elders in community improvement. Another uniqueness of this study is the inclusion of analysis at the age group level in the community context. The present study takes into consideration both community and age group attributes to predict the patterns of community involvement. Finally, the study focuses on potential implications of its findings in the policy arena, which is significant given the increasing population aging in a majority of communities in the United States. The effect of population aging on communities has not been pursued by large-scale, quantitative studies where findings can be generalized.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of six chapters. The first chapter states the problem and research objectives, along with a discussion of the uniqueness of the research. The second chapter contains a review of the theoretical frameworks pertinent to the problem and a series of research propositions. In the third chapter, a discussion of prior studies and their findings leads to a conceptual model and set of hypotheses. The fourth chapter describes methods used for this research, including the selection of a sample and measurement issues. In the fifth chapter, results are discussed. The final chapter summarizes the study and provides conclusions including directions for future research and implications for policy recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

What causes people to participate in locality-based projects? The purpose of this chapter is to answer this question with the assistance of various theoretical perspectives relevant to community involvement. It is necessary to discuss community involvement as a distinct phenomenon and to draw upon literature concerning voluntarism, collective action, and community participation as concepts that parallel the meaning of community involvement.

Community Involvement

While community involvement involves certain elements of collective action, not all collective action is community involvement. According to Tilly, "if a group applies pooled resources to common ends, it is carrying on collective action" (1973:214). If a group of individuals applies pooled resources to the common good of the locality in which the individuals live, the group is carrying on collective action. However, a group's common goals need not be tied to the place where they live. In other words, its common goals may not always be the common good of the community in which members reside. For example, a group of workers employed by the same company may carry out collective action when asking their employer for a pay raise. In this case, the group's common goal of a pay raise is not the common good of the community where the business is located and its employees are likely to be living. Thus, whether or not a certain collective action is community involvement is determined largely by whether or not the participants' common ends equal the common goal of the geographic space shared by the participants for daily living.

Although the definition of community involvement in the present study includes the dimension of voluntarism, not all volunteer work is community involvement. When narrowly defined, volunteering is "unpaid work within the

context of a formal organization or a voluntary association," and can be broadly defined as including formal as well as informal activities (Chambre 1984:293). Volunteering is often conceptualized as a substitute for work, fulfilling most of the functions associated with work and constituting a service to society (Cohen-Mansfield 1989:214). For example, one can volunteer at a local nursing home, which clearly benefits the nursing home as an organization by saving human resources-related expenses while benefiting nursing home residents who receive assistance from the volunteer. Such volunteer work need not contribute to the common good of the community in which the nursing home is located, but rather the private good of the nursing home and most likely the individual well-being of nursing home residents. On the other hand, volunteering to raise funds for improving the look of a town's main street is considered an act of community involvement. The improved appearance of the town's main street is the public good that is available to any members of the community for use and appreciation.

It is also necessary to distinguish between community organizational membership and community involvement. Resident involvement in formal community organizations has been used to capture community involvement in a number of studies (Karsada and Janowitz 1974; Beggs, Hurlbert, and Haines 1996), but membership in a community organization is not equivalent to community involvement. Broadly speaking, community organization membership may be viewed as a form of participation in community affairs. However, membership is a status and not an act. While those with membership in a community organization are more likely to learn about and to be recruited for community projects compared to others without a membership, membership alone does not automatically result in community involvement. One can argue instead that organization membership is linked to community involvement behavior and is, therefore, suggestive of community involvement.

Having clarified what indeed constitutes community involvement, I will now turn to the two main concepts that help predict community involvement: 1) personal benefits that individuals expect as a result of their involvement in community projects, and 2) social relations as an important dimension of the social context in which community involvement behavior occurs. The first idea relates to the discussion of collective action by rational choice theorists and is implied in the majority of voluntarism literature. The second notion that social relations help predict community involvement has been suggested by more recent voluntarism literature and some rational choice theorist geographers. This second view has also been pursued more extensively by a number of scholars who have utilized concepts such as social capital and embeddedness.

Community Involvement and Personal Benefits

Individuals voluntarily participate in locality-based projects when they expect to receive personal benefits as a result of participation. This line of thinking is consistent with rational choice theory in its attempt to explain collective action as purposive behavior. As mentioned previously, collective action is not the same as community involvement. Yet, some community involvement behaviors result from collective action, and that is why rational choice theory's explanations for collective action is beneficial to the understanding of community involvement. From the rational choice perspective, collective action has been defined as "a product of atomized decisions made by individuals who come together in pursuit of similar self-interests" (Ryan 1994:8). As an egoistic paradigm, the rational choice perspective stipulates that individuals would choose to participate depending on perceived personal gains or losses expected from participating.

Rooted in neoclassical economics, rational choice theory generally assumes 1) individualism, 2) utilitarianism, and 3) human rationality (Etzioni

1988). The theory's explanation of behavior relies on the atomized notion of individuals, thereby focusing on personal-level processes and outcomes. It is assumed that individuals act autonomously in accordance with self motivations. The theory implies the voluntary nature of individual behavior. As far as community involvement is concerned, individuals are free to choose between involvement and non-involvement, and their degree of involvement. Those individuals who are motivated voluntarily choose to participate, and their level of involvement is determined by their degree of motivation.

The second assumption of rational choice theory is that individuals act based on expected utilities. Combined with the earlier notion of individualism, the utility in question is personal self-interest. One of the questions that a potential participant may therefore raise is, "How does my involvement help fulfill my self-interest?" Here community involvement can be viewed as a means to achieve a certain personal goal.

A third assumption of rational choice theory is that humans use rationality to determine how to achieve goals in the most efficient manner. As rational actors, individuals seek to maximize personal utility by minimizing costs and maximizing benefits. Under this assumption, individuals are viewed as making decisions on involvement based on the calculation of benefits relative to losses. For example, a person would choose to participate only if the time, energy, and money required is more than offset by the personal gain received through participation.

Based on these assumptions, it is reasoned that rational, self-interested individuals will choose to participate in collective action involving public goods. According to Olson (1965), the rational individual will not participate but instead become a free rider unless coercion, incentives or other special devices are used to encourage individuals to act. The logic is that the public benefits obtained from collective actions are non-exclusionary and are available even to those who do not participate. From the point of view of rational choice theory, it is generally

considered irrational for one to participate in collective action when given the opportunities to free ride.¹

A body of literature on voluntarism tends to agree with the rational choice argument. The voluntarism literature often has sought reasons for volunteering by focusing on associations between an individual's voluntaristic behavior (including community involvement) and personal attributes. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady's (1995) conception of civic participation rests upon one's motivation and capacity to take part in political life. According to this conception, a citizen must choose to be active. There are at least two different approaches stemming from this individualist assumption. In one, individual resources are considered important for predicting volunteering. For example, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady's (1995) civic voluntarism model includes money as a major resource that predicts an individual's political activities. Although community involvement need not always take the form of political activity, one can imagine situations where individuals' community involvement may be influenced by the availability of

¹ The free rider problem as argued by Olson (1965) is illustrated by the elementary prisoner's dilemma, which is a game by two parties, an individual and everyone else, with a particular outcome (Barnes and Sheppard 1992:12). Each party may strategize either to participate or not to participate in collective action. If neither participates in collective action, then the benefits, A, are equal for every individual. If both participate, then the benefits, B, are equal for everyone and are higher than A. If the individual participates whereas everyone else does not, the individual incurs a cost, D, of engaging in an action that others do not support, whereas everyone else gains A. If everyone else participates whereas the individual does not, those participating yield almost as much a benefit as when both participate, discounted by the impact of the individual's nonparticipation. In this case, however, the nonparticipating individual experiences a gain, C, from free riding, and C is greater than A or B. This is a case where the free rider problem exists. In the prisoner's dilemma game that does not specify possibilities for cooperation, it is logical that a rational individual will free ride to experience the largest possible gain, C, rather than risk incurring a cost, D, by participating in collective action alone (Barnes and Sheppard 1992).

resources. Perhaps, when community participation requires a financial incentive, only those who can afford to are able to participate.

Beyond this simple scenario, there may be other reasons why persons with more financial resources are more involved in community work. To illustrate another scenario, a comparison can be made between a renter and a homeowner. It is reasonable to assume that homeowners as a group have more financial resources than renters. In a community project to beautify the main street of a community, who is to benefit more? Both renters and homeowners will enjoy the newly improved look of the main street, the public good of the community, from which no one is excluded. At the same time, homeowners are expected to reap additional individual benefits from the project by protecting or enhancing the property values of homes. Thus, homeowners are more likely to be involved than renters in community projects that aim to improve the quality of community life. More broadly, the more financial resources one has, the more likely one is to participate in community projects.

The second approach found in the voluntarism literature begins with the assertion that there exists an element of personal interest in people's motives for community involvement. For example, Bell (1995) distinguishes between traditional forms of volunteering and what may be called community participation. Whereas the former conjures images of altruism, the latter is motivated largely by self-help or mutual aid (Bell 1995). Bell (1995) asserts that self-help is a major motive for local activism, although altruism is not entirely overruled. This idea suggests that the elements of individualism and utilitarianism are found in local activism such as community involvement. Hodgkinson (1995) agrees that people, in general, have motives for community involvement due to both personal interest as well as concerns for other people or for whole communities of which they are members. For example, educated persons can benefit from their involvement because it will help their career. For the same reason, people who are in the labor force can benefit from involvement.

Bell (1995) and Hodgkinson (1995) both point out how people's community involvement reflects their own personal interests and concerns for others who are somehow related to them. Normally, parents of school-aged children would be more likely to participate in a school bond issue than others without school-aged children. Thus, the two approaches found in voluntarism literature are, for the most part, in the spirit of Olson's (1965) rational choice explanation, while acknowledging the presence of certain altruistic motives.

Based on the rational choice argument, it is proposed that individuals expecting to benefit personally from community projects tend to be involved in those projects. An individual's financial resources are likely to determine the probability of community involvement because those with more stakes in their locality are expected to benefit more from improvement in the community than their counterparts with less at stake in the community.

There is a vast body of literature that goes beyond the personal benefit argument of individual participation in collective action and voluntarism. The common theme of that body of literature, crosscutting different theoretical views of rational choice, voluntarism, embeddedness, and social capital, is the significance of social influences in understanding human behavior.

Community Involvement and Social Relations

Community involvement is an act that does not occur in a vacuum and therefore should be understood as an act that occurs in a certain social context. In thinking about the initial process of community involvement, one has to learn about the need to be involved and sometimes is asked to participate. Although one can learn about the need to be involved in community projects through the mass media, the mass media would not help much with encouraging people to participate. Studies of diffusion and mass communication have shown that people rarely act on mass-media information unless it is also transmitted through

personal ties (Granovetter 1973). Social relations are, therefore, an important dimension of the social context deserving a closer attention.

In his explanation of collective action based on rational choice theory, Elster (1989) encompasses a broader scope than Olson (1965) by considering factors such as human interactions, social norms, and altruism. Elster (1989) states that social norms are one of the human motivations along with rationality (implying that social norms represent irrationality). He further maintains that, in addition to self-interest, social norms and altruism contribute to cooperation, which could lead to participation in collective action. According to this view, community involvement would be an irrational act, motivated by altruism as an individual trait and social norms internalized in individuals.

As noted by Ryan (1994), the utilitarian calculation of personal costs and benefits is the main motivation to participate in collective action according to the egoistic paradigm originating from neoclassical economics. An alternative explanation of collective action comes from the structural functionalist school, which sees it as a mechanical response of individuals based on the group's interest and without distinct personal identity. This view called the "oversocialized paradigm" (Etzioni 1988) is criticized by Granovetter (1985) as having the same fault found in the egoistic paradigm. This is because individuals' decisions to participate in collective action rely on their motivations, in other words, social norms, that are internalized in their self-identity.

Ryan (1994) proposes to view collective action as a by-product of the group and its members. He therefore states that individuals may actually make a rational decision to engage in community work based on factors beyond their self-interests. This statement is based on Coleman's (1988a) assertion that individuals' social situation as much as personal self-interests may affect how they assess consequences of participation in collective action and subsequently how they act. According to Coleman (1988a), norms that are supportive of

cooperation in collective action emerge if individual decisions are made in such a way to include the evaluation of other's actions.

Ryan (1994) argues that members are influenced by a community or group's norms of reciprocity in the sense that individuals carry favors and credits from prior good deeds over to future situations. Because members of a community or group share the same social environment over time, it is deemed rational for them to determine the consequences of their actions on the basis of previous and future obligations rather than to consider such actions as isolated events (Ryan 1994). Norms that are likely to affect individual community involvement behavior can emerge when community members take into consideration the actions of others. For those who have lived in the same community for some time and therefore are affected by a community's norms of reciprocity, it would be rational to evaluate community involvement in light of others' actions, and it may also be rational to be involved in community work beyond one's own self-interests.

Coleman's (1988a) and Ryan's (1994) accounts of collective action rely on the importance of social environment that influences individual rational decisions and subsequent acts. A similar argument is made by Barnes and Sheppard (1992) who consider voluntary collective action to be plausible once shared experiences and social interaction are introduced into the analysis, even without abandoning the assumption of human rationality. Space and place are important because "the individuals whose actions are being molded are embedded in the realities of space and place" (Barnes and Sheppard 1992:1) and social interactions that occur in shared space and place may lead individuals to cooperate through shared norms and/or identities. In addition, Smith (1994) is supportive of the notion that space and place are crucial for understanding voluntarism. Territory is an important contextual variable that independently affects individual volunteer participation (Smith 1994).

Along the same lines, Verba and his associates (1995) propose that an individual's experiences in major social institutions predict civic participation due to increased opportunities for recruitment. People who share membership in various social institutions may ask the individual to volunteer. As a matter of fact, there has been an attempt to explain voluntary political participation based on the concept of "social connectedness" as a precursor to voter turnout (Miller and Shanks 1996), which is a voluntary act. The same hypothesis has been tested with the use of terms such as "social cooperation," "social involvement," or "community integration" (Miller and Shanks 1996:100). Miller and Shanks (1996) posit that social connectedness - represented by home ownership, number of years in the home, number of years in the community, marital status, and church attendance - may predict greater voting frequency. Voting and community involvement overlap in the sense that both require voluntary participation, and the idea of social connectedness or social ties in the community becomes critical to understanding what influences people to volunteer participation in community work, regardless of the expected personal benefit.

As alluded to by Coleman (1988a) and Ryan (1994), an alternative form of rationality takes into account the notion of social situations, that may result in cooperation. Miller (1992) utilizes the concept of "communicative rationality" from Habermas' theory of communicative action in order to underscore the role of space and place for explaining collective action. According to Habermas' theory, there are two realms of human life - the "system," oriented around success in material production and reproduction and the "lifeworld," in which values, identities, institutions, aesthetics, and traditions are reproduced and transformed through an ongoing interpretive process of communicative action. Whereas the former relies on instrumental rationality with a focus on efficiency, the latter is guided by communicative rationality and emphasizes the interaction of people seeking to reach an understanding about their shared situation. It is this alternative form of rationality adopted in lifeworld that is expected to be linked to

community involvement behavior. Place-based social relations constitute interactions in the lifeworld and are therefore guided by communicative rationality. Miller (1992) helps connect place-based social relations to individual involvement in place-based projects.

Given these arguments, clearly emerging is the proposition that an individual act of community involvement is influenced by social norms generated from place-based social relations. The discussion of the embeddedness perspective and social capital theory will provide further insight into the process of exploring these relationships.

Embeddedness and social capital

The embeddedness perspective and social capital theory are helpful for understanding the relationship between social relations, norms, and actions. Numerous scholars have contributed to developing theoretical arguments based on embeddedness and social capital. Granovetter's (1985) embeddedness argument concerns the extent to which action is embedded in ongoing structures of social relations; it contrasts the rational choice view that behavior and institutions result from the pursuit of self-interest by rational, atomized individuals. Unlike the under- and oversocialized views, an individual's or a group's actions are conceived as being mediated by a stable network of relations, and such social relations are thought to generate behavioral norms for individuals and groups.

Granovetter's (1985) approach focuses on the qualities of a specific social structure created by social relations, which determines the degree of order or disorder in social life. The embeddedness argument stresses the importance of structures of personal relations - or networks - in generating trust and discouraging malfeasance. Trust in an individual is produced not only through direct one-on-one successful transactions, but through successful transactions

with other contacts within a network. People have incentives not to "cheat." Cheating not only will ruin their reputation with the individual they cheated, it will also ruin their reputation throughout that individual's networks. Simply put, the embeddedness argument states that a stable network of relations mediates transactions and generates appropriate norms between individuals and groups (Granovetter 1985).

With the embeddedness perspective as a backdrop, Lin's (1999) theorizing of social capital is enlightening for purposes of exploring the influence of social relations on an individual's community involvement. Lin (1999:35) defines social capital as "resources embedded in a social structure which are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions." He identifies two major perspectives of social capital: One perspective focuses on the uses of social capital. Important analytical questions concerning instrumental actions are how individuals invest in social relations and how individuals capture the resources in the relations to gain returns (Lin 1999:32). The other perspective focuses on social capital at the group level. Here questions pertain to how groups develop and maintain social capital as a collective asset and how such an asset enhances group members' life chances. Both of these perspectives take the position that members maintain and reproduce social capital through interaction (Lin 1999:32).

There are three aspects in social capital that are mentioned by most scholars studying the concept. They are opportunity (accessibility), structural (embeddedness), and action-oriented (use) aspects. Related to these three aspects of social capital are at least six ways in which social relations influence community involvement. The first two focus on the use of social capital by individuals and the remaining four focus on social capital as a group property.

First, social relations provide individuals with opportunities for community involvement. An individual's social relations in a community may provide an opportunity for involvement by connecting the person to another who already

knows about the project or is recruiting people to participate in a community project. Social networks facilitate the flow of information because social ties located in strategic locations can provide an individual with information about opportunities and choices (Lin 1999). The consideration of social networks as opportunities mirrors Bourdieu's (1986) conception of social capital in that he recognizes how social connections allow access to actual or potential resources linked to such social connections. Social capital is defined by Bourdieu (1986:248) as

the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.

Given this definition, social capital represents accessibility to resources connected to membership which presumes ongoing social relations among members. From the standpoint of an individual, resources include information about community projects and subsequent opportunities to participate, because one knows about them and secondly because one is asked by someone to participate.

Based on Bourdieu's (1986) definition of social capital, the amount of social capital held by an agent depends on the size of the network of relationships the agent has and on the volume of the capital possessed by each of those to whom the agent is connected. The value of social capital is determined by network size and resources that can be accessed through the network. This suggests that an individual's network size would be positively related to the likelihood that the individual would know about community involvement opportunities. It does not automatically assume, however, that community involvement brings some form of personal benefits whether they are opportunities to meet people or to protect the value of their property. An

individual may face obligations instead of opportunities depending on the circumstances.

The second way in which place-based social relations are linked to community involvement is through norms of reciprocity, which may govern exchanges in relationships. Based on friendship and acquaintanceship, individuals may participate in community projects as a way to return favors or to accumulate credits. As Lin (1999) points out, social capital as a resource embedded in social relations has use value in the sense that it can be utilized to instigate a desired action. In a way, social capital represents "investment in social relations with expected returns" (Lin 1999:30). Community involvement can be understood as an outcome of community members' investment in social relations. Thus, one may not only learn about a community project through one's relationship with another community member, but also may be asked to participate in the project by providing time, energy, or money, sometimes even against one's immediate self-interest. It is norms of reciprocity that can prompt an individual to participate in a community project as a favor, or out of obligation for the person who recruits participants.

As an illustration, if a friend had invested in our relationship by helping me whenever I was in need of help, I would feel indebted to my friend and may feel obligated to participate in a community project when asked by the friend. The idea is to reciprocate the past favors provided by the friend. In another case, even if I do not feel indebted to my friend, I still may do my friend a favor by participating, or otherwise invest in the relationship. Even though it is uncertain if the friend would reciprocate in the future, norms of reciprocity are likely to dictate decisions and subsequent behavior.

It is important to recognize non-strategic or non-instrumental aspects of these transactions that the rational choice framework fails to acknowledge. A network of connections exist because of individual or collective investment strategies aimed at developing and maintaining social relationships for short- or

long-term use; but profits are not always pursued consciously (Bourdieu 1986). It remains true, however, that the two ways just discussed demonstrate the mechanisms of the influence of social relations on an individual's community involvement, geared toward the more or less strategic or instrumental aspects of social capital, with an understanding of social capital as a resource connected to, made accessible to, and usable by an individual.

Coleman (1988b) depicts social capital as a group-level characteristic that has value for the group as well as its members. Because it inheres in social relations, social capital is not easily exchanged and is not the private property of any persons who may benefit from it (Coleman 1988b). In this regard, social capital is thought of as a by-product of action available for use by any of the group's members (Ryan 1994). The remaining four mechanisms concerning the relationship between social relations and community involvement differ considerably from the two discussed earlier because each involves the conception of social capital as a group property and not as an individual characteristic of group members. While groups can exist beyond the boundary of a community where individuals live, groups that exist within the limit of a community are considered for purposes of the present research. Furthermore, communities are also considered groups. As a group of individuals can be understood based on the structure of social relations among its members, community as a group can be described as the structure of social relations among its members. Everyone knows everyone else in some communities while in other communities, residents know only a small fraction of other residents by name. One may argue that communities vary in the structure of social relations that exist among their community members.

Drawing on Coleman (1988b), Ryan (1994) explains how group members' ongoing social relationships may lead to a certain amount of obligations and expectations held by members in a group, which have not been offset by favors returned. A group's high levels of obligations and expectations outstanding mean

that more social capital is available on which members can draw, and the reservoir of social capital in a group can be tapped as a valuable resource that increases the propensity for collective action (Ryan 1994:12). Implicit in this scenario is a high level of trust and the fact that this form of social capital is an outcome of repeated social interactions between individuals. Coleman (1988b) notes that social capital represents resources in family relations and in community social organizations that are useful for individual and collective interests. Social capital therefore exists within the family but also outside the family and in the community (Coleman 1990:334). On the basis of the preceding argument, communities with high levels of obligations and expectations outstanding among residents are likely to have higher levels of community involvement by their residents.

Another mechanism by which social relations are linked to community involvement concerns group expectations that affect group members through "norms and effective sanctions" (Coleman 1988b). Norms facilitate certain actions and effective sanctions constrain other actions. In certain groups, members share the feelings of obligation to follow group expectations primarily based on prior exchanges. When group members share feelings of obligation to meet group expectations, a group tends to follow norms that promote fairness (Ryan 1994). It is fair to expect everyone participate in the production of a public good because no group member would be excluded from the benefits. Norms of fairness, when they exist, expect all members to equally participate in promoting a public good without private gains. As long as such norms of fairness exist, members imitate others who are involved and would be less likely to free-ride (Ryan 1994). Coleman (1988b:S105) explains that such norms are internalized in some cases and in others are supported through external rewards for selfless actions and disapproval for selfish actions. Members may act due to a fear of punishment or expectation of reward. The sanctioning capacity of a group therefore encourages collective action among its members (Ryan 1994). With

these norms and sanctions, a rational social actor mentioned earlier is likely to choose to participate in community projects beyond his or her own self-interest. This form of social capital helps facilitate the development of nascent social movements, in general leads persons to work for the public good (Coleman 1988b:S105), and therefore helps facilitate active community involvement. As with the prior mechanism involving the high level of obligations and expectations, it requires ongoing relationships among individuals in the shared territory to generate norms and effective sanctions capable of facilitating community involvement.

Additionally, there is merit in considering the notion of closure in social networks that Coleman (1988b) discusses as a structural dimension that facilitates social capital. Closure, or network density, means that sufficient ties exist between a certain number of people to guarantee the observance of norms (Portes 1998). Closure of a social network is important for the existence of effective norms and for the trustworthiness of social structures because it allows the proliferation of obligations and expectations. According to Coleman (1988b), dense networks made up of strong ties are a necessary condition for the emergence of social capital because such a social structure is likely to have a closure. In an open structure, reputation cannot arise, and collective sanctions that would maintain trustworthiness within a group cannot be exercised (Coleman 1988b:S107-S108). People who are members of a group with considerable closure would be inclined to participate in community projects because of their sense of obligations and the expectations of others. The group can be a circle of friends or relatives who live in the same locality. People in a closed structure fear losing their reputation. If they do not participate, they may face collective sanctions for defecting from an obligation. Based on this view, the possibility of defection from community involvement within the tightly knit community is minimized by the strength of community members' ties through family,

community, and religious affiliation, all which generate trustworthiness and ensure collective sanctions.

Beyond its influence through norms and effective sanctions, social capital can benefit a group through a common group identity. Individuals who are being thrown together in a common situation learn to identify with each other as they interact and support each other's initiatives (Portes 1998:7). In this case, the altruistic dispositions of group members are bounded by the limits of their group (Portes 1998). This solidarity emerging from a common fate thus is called "bounded solidarity" (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). Accordingly, identifying with one's own group or community limited by a geographic boundary can be a powerful motivational force for community involvement.

Finally, social capital as a group property has the potential for information that inheres in social relations, and such information is important in providing a basis for action (Coleman 1988b). Social relations may function as information channels and may contribute to diffusing information to group members. Given this, the flow of information about community projects becomes possible in part due to social networks maintained by community members and the successful diffusion of information throughout the community. This in turn may lead to the high level of community involvement in the community.

Whereas Lin (1999) emphasizes individual benefits of opportunities or accessibility derived from individual social networks or relations, Granovetter (1973) discusses benefits for not only individuals, but also for communities by describing the macro implication of one aspect of small-scale interaction. Lin (1999) couches his theorizing of social networks in the concept of social capital while Granovetter's (1973) theoretical framework revolves around the notion of the strength of ties. The strength of a tie involves the combination of the amount of time, emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocal services that characterize the tie (Granovetter 1973).

Weak ties in and of themselves are often thought of as being responsible for alienation, but are deemed indispensable not only to individuals' opportunities, but also to their integration into communities (Granovetter 1973). In addition, whatever is to be diffused can reach a larger number of people and travel greater social distance when it is passed through weak ties rather than strong ties (Granovetter 1973:1366). Hence, individuals with many weak ties are most likely to diffuse information (Granovetter 1973). The benefits of weak ties in diffusion processes are explained with the concept of a bridge which is a line in a network that provides the only path between two points (Granovetter 1973). Since each person generally has many contacts, a bridge between A and B provides the only route along which information or influence can flow from any contact of A to any contact of B. Whereas all bridges are weak ties, no strong tie is a bridge except under unlikely conditions that exist only if neither party has other strong ties (Granovetter 1973:1364). Granovetter (1973:1365) refers to a tie as a "local bridge." A local bridge in a social network is significant as a connection between two sectors to the extent that it is the only alternative for many people (Granovetter 1973:1365). Thus, weak social ties, as opposed to strong social ties, tend to function as information channels and contribute to diffusing information to group members. Without using the term social capital, Granovetter (1973) significantly contributes to social capital theory by demonstrating the mechanism through which social relations assist in community involvement processes.

The first two mechanisms discussed utilize social capital as individuals' potential resources; the remaining three are based on the conception of social capital as a group property. I suggest conceptualizing social capital as a property for an age group and will support this idea in the later section discussing the use of the age-stratification perspective.

Social capital as an age group property

As a middle-range theoretical framework, Granovetter's (1985) embeddedness perspective is applicable to analyzing the actions of individuals who are of similar age. Applying the embeddedness perspective, individuals' actions are mediated by their ongoing social relationships with others in the same age group as well as outside the age group. Such social relations generate behavioral norms appropriate for age group members and age groups. These age-based expectations are the basis for conceptualizing age groups as groups.

If social capital is a group characteristic that has value for the group, social capital found in a certain age group should have value for the age group. A specific age group's social capital would be found in social relations that age group members have and represent resources useful for the collective interests of the age group. For instance, if an age group for the ages of 55 and 74 has more extensive local social ties than an age group for the ages of 75 and over, the former group would have more resources available for the collective interests of the age group than the latter. According to Granovetter's (1973) assertion regarding the relationship between weak ties and integration mentioned in the previous section, members in an age group with more extensive local ties would be more integrated to their community and would have greater accessibility to community involvement opportunities.

Social capital is considered either as potential benefits for individual actors or as features of social organizations. When conceptualized as collective features for a community, social capital can be useful in understanding why some communities have a higher level of community involvement by their residents and others do not.

Social capital as a community property

Social capital that resides in social relations among community members has value for the community. For example, comparisons can be made between two communities with different levels of acquaintanceship density. If the average number of local ties is 5 per person in one community and 20 in another community, the two communities will have different amounts of social capital and therefore different levels of community involvement are expected. It will be easier to diffuse information in the second community with a greater density of acquaintanceships because of its greater number of weak ties. Compared to the first community, the second community is also likely to have more effective norms and sanctions due to the greater likelihood of closure in the community networks.

A specific case in which social capital is conceptualized as a collective feature helps understand community outcome as found in Robert Putnam's (1995) work, since he associates social capital with the level of civiness in communities such as towns, cities, or even entire nations. In his investigation of why some democratic governments succeed and others fail, Putnam (1993) has, in a way, extended Miller's (1992) argument concerning place-based social relations and collective action.

Putnam (1995) defines social capital as features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that encourage coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Of these features, networks are considered the most important for community involvement purposes. Some networks are primarily "horizontal," bringing together people who have equivalent status and power; other networks are primarily "vertical" or they link unequal agents in hierarchical and dependent relations (Putnam 1993:173). Putnam (1993) argues that a vertical network cannot sustain social trust and cooperation partially because vertical flows of information are often less reliable than horizontal flows.

Networks of civic engagement such as the neighborhood associations, choral societies, cooperatives, sports clubs, and mass-based parties represent intense horizontal interaction (Putnam 1993:173). Putnam's (1993) contends that networks of civic engagement would help resolve dilemmas of collective action by encompassing broad segments of society and thus facilitating cooperation at the community level. Networks of civic engagement that cut across social cleavages allow wider cooperation while dense but segregated horizontal networks found in small groups such as close-knit ethnic minorities sustain cooperation within each group (Putnam 1993:175). Networks of civic engagement represent a particular type of networks in that they encompass three elements. These elements are: (a) the structure of social relations, (b) resulting from the past act of engagement, and (c) in activities of civic nature. These three elements make networks of civic engagement as being closely related to territory- or place-based voluntary acts which include the act of community involvement.

Putnam (1993) explains four major mechanisms where networks of civic engagement facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. First, networks of civic engagement foster norms of reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust. People who interact in many social situations are more likely to develop strong norms of appropriate behavior and express their mutual expectations to one another. Second, participants in the dense networks of interaction are especially likely to broaden their sense of self from the individual into the collectivity, thereby making it easier to pursue the common good. The networks also facilitate coordination and communication, and improve the flow of information on the trustworthiness of other individuals. The networks allow people's reputations to be transmitted and refined. Finally, the networks of civic engagement embody past experiences of successful collaboration, which can serve as a culturally-defined template for future collaboration. The networks established for civic engagement or participation in collective action in the past

would contribute to strong norms of reciprocity in the collectivity, which would, in turn, facilitate the process of recruitment of participants for collective action. As far as implications from these explanations are concerned, networks of civic engagement, particularly when the networks of interaction are dense, are the potential source of high levels of community involvement in communities, producing and nurturing effective norms and social trust, which are other features of social capital as a community property.

Whereas Bourdieu (1986) discusses the inheritance of social capital within a family, Putnam addresses (1993) the inheritance of social capital within a community by suggesting that life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital. What this idea of inheritance signifies is the investment aspect of social capital and that the use of social capital may not always be made by those who invest in its development. Social capital may linger on in the form of norms of reciprocity and social trust even after the networks and people involved in the networks cease to exist.

Putnam's attempt at theorizing social capital at the place level is enlightening. Portes (1999) does not deny the refinement of social capital as a structural property of large aggregates, but subject to proper care and theoretical refinement. It is important to be cautious about cause and effect arguments concerning social capital because Portes (1999) points out that social capital, as a property of communities and nations rather than individuals, is both a cause and an effect. There are certain logical cautions to be observed (Portes 1999:20-21). First, the analyst must separate the definition of the concept, theoretically and empirically, from its alleged effects. Second, the analyst must ensure that the presence of social capital is prior to the outcomes that it is expected to produce. Third, it is necessary to control for the presence of other factors that can account for both social capital and its alleged effects. Finally, it is important to identify the historical origins of community social capital in a systematic manner.

In an attempt to refine social capital theory, Lin (1999) posits that one must understand social capital based on its theoretical roots in social relations and social networks. Lin's (1999) view is in disagreement with Putnam's (1993) in terms of what constitutes social capital. Lin (1999) thinks that social capital as a relational asset must be distinguished from collective assets and goods such as culture, norms, trust, etc. Lin (1999) argues that collective assets and goods should not be considered alternate forms of social capital, although it is appropriate to propose that such collective assets promote the relations and networks and improve the utility of embedded resources, or vice versa. It indicates that norms and social trust are not social capital and that they may affect and be affected by social capital. Given these recommendations, the conceptualization of social capital as a relational asset is appropriate and the refinement of social capital theory at the community level is necessary.

Granovetter's (1973) work on the strength of weak ties provides a clue as to how to conceptualize social capital although Granovetter (1973) does not use the term to discuss advantages of weak ties. Structural aspects of network ties discussed by him as having use value for information diffusion processes as well as community organization constitute social capital as a community property or a collective feature of a community.

In demonstrating the benefits of weak ties in diffusion processes, Granovetter (1973) suggests that certain structural aspects of network ties facilitate or prohibit community organization. It is suggested that strong ties lead to overall fragmentation while breeding local cohesion. There are basically two different aspects of the social relations that exist in a community. One concerns cliques, and the other is related to mobility. Community organization would be severely inhibited when a community is divided into isolated groups with each one tied to every other member in one's own clique and to no one outside the clique. If all ties in the community were ego's friends of one another with all their friends being ego's friends as well, all ties are either strong or absent. In such a

circumstance, network structure would break down into the unconnected groups unless each resident had strong ties to everyone else in the community.

While only an "aerial view" of the network may be able to reveal what the structure of social network looks like in a particular locality and whether or not it is fragmented (Granovetter 1973:1374), one can speculate that a community with residential stability and more lifelong friendships is likely to have some weak ties. This is because each resident would know many others, resulting in more weak ties. Another principle is that the more local bridges per person in a community, the more cohesive the community and the more capable it is of acting in concert (Granovetter 1973:1376). In other words, communities where residents generally know many other residents tend to be more cooperative and thus more able to mobilize its residents for projects than their counterparts where residents know few in the community. This is due to the fact that more acquaintanceships (or weak ties) in a community mean more bridges connecting community members and groups, which facilitate cooperation and coordination. The level of acquaintanceship represents a form of social capital that has potential benefits for involvement at the community level.

Given the paramount importance of social relations and social networks for influencing community involvement as discussed thus far, social capital can be defined as the structural characteristic of ongoing social relations and social networks maintained by agents (individuals, groups, or communities) with a tendency to affect the actions of such agents usually pertaining to cooperation and coordination. With an exception of Putnam (1993), most social capital theorists conceptualize the concept of social capital at the individual or group level. To understand the concept better at the community level, literature on community action will be reviewed below.

Community action

Although the body of literature on community action does not utilize the concept of social capital, the literature points out the significance of social relations for community agency. The theorizing of community action helps link the social relational quality of a community with the community's ability to mobilize its citizens. Community organization therefore is the main concern in most community action literature. There exist some parallels between social capital and community action literature. Community organization as per social capital theorists would benefit from ongoing social relations and networks while writings on community action focus on issues of communication, information diffusion, and the mobilization of various groups within a community and/or across communities (Tilly 1973; Luloff 1990; Luloff and Swanson 1995; Wilkinson 1991). As social capital theory and the embeddedness perspective mostly concern social ties, works on community action generally mention interactions as the key to community action.

Unlike the rational choice approach to collective action, Tilly's (1973:212) explanation of collective action focuses on communities, based on a definition of community as "any durable local population most of whose members belong to households based in the locality." Tilly's conception of collective action is consistent with the definition of community involvement in the sense that both require community members' voluntary acts of pursuing the common good of a community.

According to Tilly (1973:214), "if a group applies pooled resources to common ends, it is carrying on collective action," and degrees of collective action are determined by the extent and immediacy of pooling resources and involvement of the community in applying them. This differs from the definition of Miller (1982) who defines collective action as purposeful action of a group of people intended to provide for the common good of the group. While Miller's

(1982) definition focuses on the achievement of goals, the central feature of Tilly's definition is that of resource-pooling. By resource-pooling, Tilly (1973:212) means "the massing of every man, woman, and child in front of the city hall" and "the time and energy of the citizens" instead of "a city administrator's expenditure of tax revenues on a new water cooler in the name of citizenry."

A general model of community action stages by Luloff (1990:227) describes the process of community action. At first, some person or group must become aware of a problem and express an interest in working towards its solution. The next stage is when those who are involved in the resolution of the issue define goals and map out strategies by which these goals are realized. During the third stage, legitimization is sought from the wider community audience by enlisting the cooperation of persons who often by virtue of their position in the community can make or break the chances of the group's action being successful. The fourth stage involves the mobilization of wide-scale support and the stockpiling of resources (money and people) for use in the effort. Finally, implementation of the strategy occurs and a residue of sentiment or a network of relationships is created, often serving as the whetstone for future action.

Given the general model of community action, tactics of community organization suggested by Tilly (1973) concentrate on how to mobilize community members, which resembles Granovetter's (1973) concerns regarding community organization. The tactics recommended by Tilly (1973) consist of lowering mobilization costs by creating leadership, establishing communications lines, and feeding in information. In other words, they all revolve around the issue of efficient communications which point to the significance of efficient information diffusion - what Granovetter (1973) thinks will benefit from denser weak ties.

As Granovetter (1973) has concentrated on social ties in communities, Luloff (1990) focuses on interactional patterns. Considering the fact that many

communities in the United States play important roles in setting local policies and agendas, analyzing the patterns of such community influences is expected to reveal the source of and response to community action stimuli (Luloff 1990). Luloff (1990) suggests the use of the interactional approach which is an attempt to determine the levels and types of emergent community behavior as it occurs. Because it is rooted in the dynamic context of community, the interactional framework tends not to focus on aggregate sociodemographic measures, but rather on the pattern of ongoing activities within the community. The desired ends with respect to the problems, decisions, and/or opportunities confronting the community should be understood as the product of actors in associational action (Luloff 1990:220).

Wilkinson (1991) is in agreement with Luloff (1990) when claiming that relationships among individuals and organizations in a community are critical for community actions. Wilkinson (1991:10) observes that quality of life tends to increase when the barriers to community interaction are reduced in either rural or urban settings. Wilkinson (1991:109) argues that the community is an interactional phenomenon, and that this way of looking at the community provides a unique way of thinking about social life and social well-being in rural areas.

There are three essential properties of the interactional community. First, the community is a local ecology as an organization of social life for meeting daily needs and adapting to changes in a particular territorial and social environment. Second, the community represents a comprehensive interactional structure which is a social whole, a common life that expresses not simply one need or interest but the full round of common needs and interests of local residents. This is because the community is a holistic structure, although the lives of people need not be wholly contained within its boundaries. This shows that Wilkinson accepts the extralocal influences on communities in modern society. The third property of the interactional community is a bond of local solidarity, which is

expressed in community actions. To Wilkinson, the residents of a community live together, share a common life, and act together in solving common problems and capturing opportunities for improving their common life. Under such circumstances, a social bond is naturally created and experienced by residents not only cognitively, but also emotionally (Wilkinson 1991). The social bond emerges unless something prevents it, and community is natural as people's natural relationships to others comprise a common life.

Application of the interactional approach to community development involves removing barriers that inhibit natural social interactions (Wilkinson 1991). Although it is a hopeful presumption to consider a person's relationship-building process as being natural, the notion of barriers to social interactions is a useful one to the extent that it is equally presumptuous to consider there are no barriers to social relationships in a community. Wilkinson's community development approach directs attention to expending efforts to communicating, exchanging information, or cooperating among residents, which are assumed to result in greater social integration. Again, this approach is in line with Granovetter's approach to the role of weak ties in community integration, except that Wilkinson focuses on the process or developmental aspect of local social action while Granovetter emphasizes the structural dimension of social ties.

Last but not least, the notions of "community agency" and "community disaffection" are also important for the understanding of community involvement (Luloff and Swanson 1995), especially as they are related to community involvement by the elderly. Elaborating on the interactionist view of Wilkinson (1991) by adding the conflict perspective, Luloff and Swanson (1995) use the term community disaffection to refer to the barriers of natural social interactions and the term "community agency" to indicate the mobilization of collective human resources. The authors maintain that community agency is more significant to consider than the factors concerning human capacity. This is because community is more a product of participation in local activities than an aggregate

of individual characteristics. Both individual and community agency is expected to have its greatest potential for expression when democracy, choice, and information are maximized (Luloff and Swanson 1995:363). Community disaffection occurs when elites are able to impose their will through the local economy, social structure, and culture (Luloff and Swanson 1995:362). Luloff and Swanson (1995) cite racism, ageism, and sexism as different forms of social intolerance. Their idea applies especially to those places lacking depth and breadth of human resources as such places cannot afford to ignore any segments of population. Those places have to consider mobilizing all of the segments of their population to overcome racism, ageism, and sexism. These places include small-size communities that lag behind simply based on the number of people constituting their membership and therefore their human resources. There are, however, untapped capacities for broad-based and effective community agency in these communities.

If Luloff and Swanson are right, there is the urgent need to address the effects of such cultural and structural barriers to democratic participation in the local decision-making process in order for community agency to fully benefit communities. When considering the mobilization of various segments of the population in a community for collective action, it is helpful to consider groups within the community and possible interconnections or disconnections among these groups. There are obviously many groups within a geographically-based community. Families, business organizations, and voluntary organizations are some of the subgroups that easily come to mind when thinking of groups within a community. These groups and their interrelationships are obviously significant for understanding the dynamics of social relations in a community in which the behaviors of community members are embedded. For example, the family and the workplace are both important as agents of socialization. As far as the elder members of a community are concerned, however, relative to the family and the workplace, the peer group is increasingly an important agent of socialization,

given the trend of the increasing geographic mobility of younger generations and the withdrawal from the workplace in old age. Although differences may exist across communities, ageism, which is cited as one of the possible structural barriers to demographic participation by Luloff and Swanson (1995), is likely to lead to increased age segregation in a community. A large proportion of an elderly person's locality-based social relations is likely to be made up of relations with other elderly persons. Therefore, it is appropriate to group together individuals based on age for purposes of the present investigation. Further justification for considering age groups will be made when discussing the age-stratification perspective.

In the first chapter, I mentioned that older generations are generally more involved in the political process than younger ones (Miller and Shanks 1996). As a form of political voluntary activity, voting is the most common and the most basic citizen act (Verba et al. 1995:9). Voting is the least demanding form of political activity (1995:22). Given the uniqueness of the vote, knowledge about voting cannot be generalized to all forms of voluntary participation (1995) such as community involvement. Knowing this limitation, one can still draw invaluable insights from the work of Miller and Shanks (1996), who propose a model of political participation based on voting behavior on the basis of the so-called generational persistence model of societal change (Miller and Shanks 1996:xiii). It is presumed that openness to change among the young is gradually replaced by stability in the persistence of early orientations. As individuals mature, their values, beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral patterns are expected to become more stable. The stable orientations are seen as predispositions that guide or determine individuals' responses to the changing environment around them (Miller and Shanks 1996). Miller and Shanks (1996) also assume that a variety of stable social and economic characteristics have played a role in shaping voters' predispositions toward policies or partisan identifications, which in turn influence their vote choice.

In addition, the researchers assert the possibility of intergenerational differences in social connectedness that may in turn result in analogous differences in voting behavior. To quote Miller and Shanks (1996:104) directly,

The principal result of exchanging post-New Deal cohorts for members of the pre-New Deal generation was to replace electors who were heavily involved, both socially and politically, with electors who were often neither identified with a party nor connected to their social environment.

Miller and Shanks' (1996) work suggests the existence of differences among different age groups in terms of community involvement as well as the extent of social connections. Assuming community involvement is a type of political involvement, elderly community members should be more actively involved in community projects than other members. Base on this assumption, communities with a large proportion of elderly residents in the population should carry out community action more successfully than those with a small proportion of elderly members. Previously I mentioned the trend of increasing population aging found in most of the communities. Successful community action would increasingly depend on the mobilization of older age groups in these communities. If ageism obstructs opportunities for the elderly population, an increasing proportion of the population representing the elderly will be alienated from community action processes. Unless ageism and other structural and cultural barriers to older people's community involvement are removed, there will be a substantial amount of untapped capacities in most of the communities. This view supports Morris and Caro's (1995) interest in promoting the idea of utilizing the growing retiree population for community problem-solving. In order to mobilize elderly community members, it is necessary to understand how elderly community members get involved. One has to ensure this if the elderly as a group differ from younger age groups in community involvement patterns. I will now turn to the discussion of the theoretical approach that allows analysis on a

population level by elaborating differences across generations or age groups as well as similarities within a generation or age group. The age-stratification perspective that takes such an approach and will be useful for analyzing the community involvement patterns of different age groups on a population level.

Age-stratification perspective

I have alluded previously to the need to consider the notion of age groups for the present inquiry. The age-stratification perspective provides extensive justification for the need to examine age groups as distinct groups of individuals when studying community involvement. Grounded in the understanding that society is stratified by age as it is stratified by other factors such as social class, the age-stratification perspective frames the present study by envisioning communities as being divided by age strata. The age-stratification perspective formalized by Riley (1976) has been heavily influenced by earlier works by scholars such as Mannheim (1952) and Ryder (1965). It is an integrative perspective in the sense that it links the changing lives of individuals with changing social structures. According to the perspective, every society is stratified by age, with both people and roles in a society divided into strata according to age (Riley 1976).

An age stratum refers to an aggregate of individuals who are of similar age at a particular time (Riley 1976:196), and age strata are the link between human aging and social change. This perspective conceives society as an age-stratification system within which important roles are age-graded and particular individuals and successive cohorts of individuals are aging (Riley 1985:370). Ryder (1965) points out that age is an important basis for role allocation in society. For example, employment roles are age-graded in the United States. As people who are fully employed reach 60 years of age, they as well as others

know that they are close to retirement in the next 5 years or so. This is due to the fact that there exists a set of behavioral expectations based on age.

Mannheim (1952:286) asserts that the problem of generations merits serious consideration because it is an indispensable guide to the understanding of the structure of social and intellectual movements. Each new cohort of individuals has unique characteristics due to the particular historical events the cohort undergoes (Mannheim 1952). He warns, however, that the generation factor, which at the biological level operates with a natural law, becomes elusive at the social and cultural level, and its effects can be ascertained with much difficulty. The generation is not a concrete group in the sense of a community, that is, a group which cannot exist without its members having concrete knowledge of each other and without physical proximity (Mannheim 1952:288-289).

According to the age-stratification perspective, people are roughly divisible into age strata at any given time based on differences in the number, characteristics, motivations, actions, and attitudes of people at different ages (Riley 1976). Divisions of the population by age mean age strata only when such divisions reflect socially significant aspects of people or of the roles they perform. There exist boundaries between strata that are socially defined and differ from one time and place to another. The age strata are not defined very clearly in the United States today, but there is evidence of awareness of age divisions. Examples include cases of age discrimination in employment, convictions and penalties varying with the age of a defendant, and subjective identification with one's own age stratum being associated with certain behaviors (Riley 1976).

A couple of the principles for the age-stratification perspective discussed by Riley are particularly relevant to the present inquiry's focus on older age groups. The first principle focuses on similarities of experience within an age group. People within an age stratum are similar in age and cohort membership, often leading to mutual experiences, perceptions, and interests that may lead to

integration or even to age-based groups and collective movements (Riley 1976). While the generation is not a concrete group in the sense of a community, the unity of generations is built by a number of individuals within a society who share a similar location based on a human's biological rhythm such as life and death, a limited time span, and aging (Mannheim 1952). Individuals belonging to the same generation share the same year of birth, have a common location in the social and historical process, and are therefore predisposed to certain thoughts and actions. This social location phenomenon exists because people born at the same time are in a position to experience the same events and interact with other people and social structure (Mannheim 1952), socially constructing what it means to be a member of a certain age group. For example, it is possible to imagine that an age group for the ages of 54 and younger has more extensive social ties than an age group for the ages of 75 and over. People tend to retire from their paid work between the ages of 55 and 65 and would most likely have retired by the time they reach 75. Retirement usually means a reduction in the number of formal ties with other employees and customers. Another example is the gradual loss of close ties such as relations with friends and family members due to deaths caused by aging.

Ryder (1965) uses the term "cohort" to elaborate on Mannheim's points. The cohort is a structural category similar to a variable like social class and reflects the common experiences of many persons in each category (Ryder 1965). Defined as the aggregate of individuals who experience the same event within the same time interval, a cohort is not homogeneous in terms of demographic characteristics such as race and birthplace, but the distribution of its heterogeneity is likely to be fixed throughout life (Ryder 1965). Age integration occurs as people age together. Age homophily is possible since small-group solidarity based on age can be promoted where age peers communicate about their similar tasks, needs, and problems especially during difficult periods in the life course (Riley 1976). Riley (1976) points out that age

tends to integrate the younger strata through age-graded education, which brings together different groups, e.g., female and male, black and white, rich and poor. Similarly, age may integrate the elderly strata through age segregation, which takes place owing to differences in life-course stages and in cohort membership and age-based cohesiveness (Riley 1976).

Another principle involved with the age-stratification perspective concerns the influence of age-based roles on people causing differentiation of experiences by age. Individuals within each age stratum are engaged in a set of roles that may influence how they age, their capacities and attitudes, and other people with whom they interact (Riley 1976). Society imposes similar functioning on those who are similar in age at a particular time (Ryder 1965). Any age-specific legislation also differentiates cohorts. Both informal and formal norms create a unique age pattern to the life cycle of each cohort. Thus, Ryder (1965) argues that different cohorts do not grow up and grow old in the same way because of social change. Successive cohorts are differentiated by the changing content of formal education, by peer-group socialization, and by idiosyncratic historical experiences (Ryder 1965:447). Based on this argument, persons in the older age strata today would be different from older persons in the past or in the future.

To summarize, the age-stratification perspective assumes similarities of experience within an age group and differentiation of experience between age groups. Individuals within the same age group are likely to be similar in terms of their attitudes toward community involvement as well as their actual level of involvement. At the same time, age groups would differ in their shared views toward community involvement and their level of involvement. Individuals who are Young-Old are likely to share similar thoughts about being involved in community work and what they often decide as to actual involvement. What they, as a group, think and do about community involvement may very well be different from what the Old-Old think and do in general. The Young-Old may think that they have done their part and should let Young community members

have the opportunities to get involved whereas the Old-Old may simply consider themselves to be too old to get involved. According to the age-stratification perspective, age group membership makes a difference in community involvement. A systematic investigation of this aspect of community involvement has been relatively unexplored.

Summary of Theoretical Perspectives

Explanations of collective action provided by rational choice theorists are mainly based on the concept of personal benefits. The voluntarism literature tends to follow this line of reasoning in explaining individual volunteering. Elster (1989) included social relations to the rational choice explanations of collective action while still assuming individual self-interest as reasons for action. Rational choice theorists such as Barnes and Sheppard (1992) and Miller (1992) readily accepted the significance of not only social relations but also place in the context within which relations occur.

Social capital theory allows the consideration of both individual and group attributes by emphasizing the social relational aspect of social capital as the major source of explanations for individual as well as group community involvement. Furthermore, Putnam (1993) has made it apparent that place is an important factor associated with social capital, especially by linking political action with social capital. Potential benefits from ongoing social relations and networks for an individual or a group (including a community) have been the general focus of social capital theorists. Frequently the presence of social capital in a group has been determined by the positive outcomes of social relations such as the norms of reciprocity, social trust, and social control. One of the most important aspects of social capital theory is the notion of closure created from dense networks of strong ties discussed by Coleman (1988) who connects this

structural dimension of social relations to positive outcomes such as effective norms.

The embeddedness position (Granovetter 1985) also stresses social relations in explaining and predicting not only individual behavior but also community social organization. The embeddedness perspective focuses on the structural aspect of social relations to explain individual and community outcomes, suggesting the implications of the structural dimension of weak ties on community mobilization for collective action mainly through information diffusion and social integration.

Following the lead of Tilly, (1973) who performed an analysis of place-based collective action, the works of Luloff (1990), Wilkinson (1991), and Luloff and Swanson (1995) are based on the authors' interest in learning about factors that affect the likelihood of community action. Interestingly, they all point to the significance of place-based social relations in community action outcomes. To promote community actions, Tilly (1973) emphasizes efficient communications, Luloff (1990) stresses the importance of community members' associational action, Wilkinson (1991) observes the need to reduce the barriers to community interaction, and Luloff and Swanson (1995) use the term "community disaffection" to describe structural and cultural barriers to democratic participation such as ageism.

The review of social capital theory and other theoretical frameworks that overlap and extend the relational dimension of social capital theory has led to the consideration of social capital as an age group property. Given the present study's focus on the elderly segment of population, the age-stratification perspective (Riley 1976; Riley and Riley 1994) is introduced as another theoretical tool to extend social capital theory. Originating from the generational and demographic arguments (Mannheim 1952; Ryder 1965), the age-stratification perspective elaborates on the social capital argument, particularly on the perspective's assumption that societies are stratified by age. This means

that there are differences among age strata in terms of members' attitudes, behaviors, and expectations. Although age strata are not social groups, similar attitudinal and behavioral patterns are found among members within the same age stratum because of the sharing of similar social and historical experiences at the same or similar age during the same period of time. Similarities within an age stratum and differences across age strata remain as members in the same age stratum are more likely to socialize among themselves than with those in other strata. Age-segregated interactional patterns are likely to be more prevalent in old age, because of retirement and the geographic mobility of younger generations, that tend to live farther away from parents when compared to previous generations. These patterns allow one to conceptualize social relations held by age group members as resources for an age group. In addition to the age factor, the issue of the population aging of a community is deemed important mainly due to its potential effect on the level of community involvement for communities.

Overall, personal benefits and social relations represent two overarching concepts that have utility for explaining community involvement and direct attention to rational choice theory, social capital theory, and the age-stratification perspective. These theoretical frameworks help identify factors closely associated with community involvement. The main factors identified include individual sociodemographics, social ties, and age group membership. The following propositions specify the relationships between these factors and community involvement.

Propositions

Nine general propositions are drawn from the discussion of theoretical perspectives. The first three propositions concern individuals, the next three apply to communities, and the last three are for age groups.

- 1) **Individuals would get involved in community projects when they expect to be compensated by personal benefits from involvement. Benefits can be financial reward or the well-being of oneself as well as one's own family. Those individuals with greater financial resources are more likely to be involved because of the greater chance of being personally rewarded from the improvement of the common good of the community. Homeowners would more likely be involved than those who rent. The more educated people are, the more likely they are to be involved due to the expected benefits in their career development. Those participating in the labor force may be involved more as they may also consider their involvement activities or work to be helpful to their career. In addition, individuals who have family members living in the same community are probably more likely to get involved because the quality of life in their community is a more important issue to them personally compared to others who do not have any such family ties in the community. Thus, an individual's marital status and the number of children in the household would determine the likelihood and extent of the individual's community involvement.**
- 2) **The extent of social ties that an individual has in a community would determine the likelihood of the individual being connected to community involvement opportunities and hence the likelihood of actual involvement. People are more likely to act on information transmitted through personal ties than the mass-media.**
- 3) **An individual's age would be related to the level of community involvement because of age-related norms about community involvement.**
- 4) **The structural quality of social ties in a community would influence the community's level of mobilization for community projects by affecting not only the diffusion of information but also coordination and cooperation among people.**

- 5) Residential stability in a community is expected to influence the level of involvement by allowing residents to develop and share common identity associated with the place, which would, in turn, facilitate mobilization of groups and individuals within a community for common projects.
- 6) The proportion of the elderly population in a community would positively affect the community's level of mobilization for community projects because the elderly are generally more actively involved in political activities compared to their younger counterparts.
- 7) Community involvement roles are age-stratified. This means that the level of community involvement varies by age group. For example, the level of community involvement by one age group would be significantly different from the level of community involvement by another age group.
- 8) Place and space are an important context for age-based norms and expectations for actions including community involvement. Thus, the level of community involvement by an age group would vary by place- or space-related characteristic.
- 9) The amount of social ties in an age group in a community would positively influence the age group's level of community involvement by increasing the likelihood of being connected to community involvement opportunities as well as the likelihood of the age group being integrated into the rest of the community, overcoming age-related biases. In this regard, the effect of age group's social ties on age group community involvement also would depend on age group-based norms, which require a certain amount of stability in the social relations maintained by age group members. This is because age group-based norms would be learned and sustained over time. Thus, the average length of residence of age group members is expected to be linked to the level of age group community involvement.

CHAPTER 3: EMPIRICAL OVERVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review research findings regarding the nine propositions mentioned in the previous chapter, which are based on the concepts of personal benefits and social relations within the frameworks of rational choice theory, the embeddedness perspective, social capital theory, and the age-stratification perspective. Given the dearth of empirical studies in the past conceptualizing community involvement as an actual act of involvement in place-based projects, I will review the studies that examined a variable partially overlapping with community involvement. Some studies that have considered resident involvement in formal community organizations as representing community participation are included for review (Karsada and Janowitz 1974; Beggs, Hurlbert, and Haines 1996). Membership in formal community organizations is suggestive of community involvement in the sense that such a membership reflects interest in community affairs and those with a membership are likely to be learn about community projects more quickly relative to others without a membership. Organizational memberships therefore would be associated with community involvement. Research of volunteering is also included for review while recognizing that not all volunteering work represents community involvement. As mentioned earlier, some of the volunteer work may involve community projects and therefore some of the factors predicting volunteering may be related with community involvement.

First, what the existing studies have found about the factors that may be associated with individual community involvement are discussed. Next, investigations that relate to the patterns of community-level community involvement are reviewed to identify the factors likely to determine the level of involvement for a community as a whole. Third, a few studies involving elders in a community setting are included for discussion. Finally, the chapter ends with a series of hypotheses based on theoretical and empirical overview.

Personal Benefits and Individual Community Involvement

It was mentioned earlier that having financial resources could be positively associated with community involvement based on the view that persons with a greater financial stake in the community are likely to benefit more from the improvement of the quality of life in their community. It also has been proposed that having family members in the same community would encourage community involvement. Findings about the association between income and some form of community participation are mixed, but most studies found a positive relationship between the two. Rank and Voss (1982) used sample survey data collected in 1977 through structured telephone interviews with 992 households located in 37 fast-growing nonmetropolitan counties in the Upper Great Lakes Region. Community involvement was measured by a scale of involvement utilizing four dichotomous measures. These included whether or not respondents had voted in local elections, belonged to any local clubs or organizations, had ever held an elected positions in an organization, and were ever elected to a government office. Results show that income is positively associated with levels of formal participation in community activities for long-term residents as well as migrants. Based on 27 rural communities in Iowa, Goudy (1990) also found a significantly positive association between income level and organizational memberships.

Hayghe's (1991) study of volunteers in the United States found that married men and women were more likely than those in other marital statuses to have volunteered at some time during the year ending in May 1989. A study concerning elderly volunteering shows the same result. Using a large sample (23,830 persons including 4,339 individuals aged 60 and over collected in 1974) representative of the U.S. population, Chambre (1984) found household income to be a significant predictor for the degree of involvement in volunteering.

On the other hand, Sampson's (1988) analysis using survey data collected in 1982 from a national sample of 10,905 residents of 238 localities in Great

Britain, suggested no significant association between social class and participation in locality-based organizations. Beggs et al. (1996), using the sample of 594 residents from 3 towns in Louisiana, did not find support for the relationship between income and membership in community groups.

Empirical findings as to the determinants of community participation or volunteering generally involve educational achievement as an important factor. Education is found to be central to the sequence of accumulating participatory resources such as labor force participation, involvement in formal organizations, church attendance, and various social activities within those churches (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Empirical evidence concerning the effect of education on community involvement as well as volunteering suggests the existence of a positive effect. Rank and Voss (1982) found that education has a positive effect on both newcomer and old timer levels of community involvement. In the study by Beggs et al. (1996) education had a moderately positive effect on membership in community groups. Differing from an earlier study by Hunter and Linn (1980-1981) that reported no differences between volunteers and nonvolunteers on the basis of various demographic variables including education, Chambre's (1984) study found that educational achievement has the greatest influence on whether an individual volunteered. In the same study, educational achievement was also found to determine the degree of involvement in volunteering (Chambre 1984). Hayghe's (1991) analysis of data from the Current Population Survey also shows that education is an important determinant of volunteering, as adults with a college degree are much more likely to do volunteer work than and those with fewer years of schooling. A review of the American social science literature on the determinants of volunteer participation in programs and associations finds that higher education is one of the variables contributing to such participation (Smith 1994). Furthermore, comprehensive analysis of American civic voluntarism based on a very large data set reveals the

special role of education in civic voluntarism (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

As for the relationship between labor force participation and organizational membership, no significant effect is reported by Sampson (1988). On the contrary, Chambre (1984) reports that labor force status is a significant predictor for the degree of involvement in volunteering.

According to existing research findings, one's marital status or the presence of children in the household does not affect one's membership in community organization or volunteering in old age. Sampson's (1988) study of residents in British communities did not find support for the relationship between marital status and community involvement in the form of organizational participation. According to Chambre's (1984) analysis of those subjects under 65, married people more often did volunteer work than the unmarried, but this association did not exist for subjects who were over 65. Among the elderly, marital status does not seem to differentiate between volunteers and nonvolunteers. Hunter and Linn (1980-1981), too, found no significant differences between volunteer workers over age 65 and retired elderly who did not engage in any type of work activity. Meanwhile, work by Rank and Voss (1982) in rural communities shows that the presence of children was not found to influence the level of community involvement significantly.

Social Ties and Individual Community Involvement

The focus of many studies that considered the effect of social ties is not on community involvement. Rather, the focus is the effect of social relations on interest in community affairs, which is not the same as involvement but may lead to an actual act of involvement. Karsada and Janowitz's (1974) research, based on survey data of a nationally representative sample of 2,199 British adults interviewed in 1967, found that number of friends was significantly and positively

associated with resident interest in what went on in a community. Work by Rank and Voss (1982) documenting patterns of rural community involvement shows that this positive effect might not be so straightforward. Interestingly, the researchers found that the presence of close friends has a significant positive effect on the level of involvement by metropolitan-origin migrants, but not nonmetropolitan migrants or residents.

Beggs and his associates (1996) suggest that Karsada and Janowitz's focus on friends limits the dimension of social networks to strong, informal ties and leaves out weaker ties considered to be important by Granovetter (1973). Beggs and his colleagues (1996) contend that focusing solely on friends and relatives may not be sufficient to measure the interpersonal dimension. They recommend that researchers tap weaker ties to better measure the local concentration of network ties (the degree to which network members reside in the local area) and the strength of local ties.

Replicating Karsada and Janowitz's (1974) investigation, Goudy (1990) used mail survey data collected from residents in 27 communities in Iowa, and his findings suggest that interest in community is significantly associated with the proportion of friends living in the respondent's community, the proportion of relatives living in the respondent's community, and the proportion of local people known. The proportion of local people known is found to be most strongly associated with respondent interest in community affairs. Goudy's (1990) findings reflect the importance of local acquaintanceship that is inclusive of weak ties. The study's support for the relationship between the proportion of local people known and interest in community validates the claim made by Freudenburg (1986), who suggests the use of the term "acquaintanceship" to indicate the inclusion of what Granovetter (1973) called "weak ties" in addition to more intimate friendships.

Someone that has lived in the same community for a long period of time and whose identity is closely connected to the community may also be more

interested in being involved in a community improvement projects when compared to others who have recently moved into the community. Existing studies indicate a positive association between individual length of residence and individual community participation as measured by individual membership in formal community organizations. In Karsada and Janowitz's (1974) research, length of residence is found to be a powerful predictor of individual membership in formal organizations inside the community, which in turn predicts interest in community affairs. In his study of rural Iowa communities, Goudy (1990) also found that length of residence is an important factor positively affecting organizational memberships. Moreover, Sampson's (1988) analysis in Great Britain indicates that length of residence significantly increases locality-based organizational participation such as attending committee meetings and clubs. On the other hand, analysis by Rank and Voss (1982) indicates that length of residence is positively associated with community involvement by newcomers to rural communities but not by old timers. The effect of length of residence may be through local ties as well as group identity. The longer one lives in the same community, the more local people one is to know, and hence length of residence may indirectly affect one's community involvement.

It is possible that attending a local church is associated with community involvement patterns by increasing the chances of sharing a group identity with fellow church members through regular contact, thereby increasing the probability of cooperation and coordination with them for common projects including community work. No existing literature however has provided conclusive support for the relationship. A study by Liu and her associates (1998) based on the 1994 data collected from 10,798 residents in rural Iowa communities shows that local church attendance helps increase community attachment both directly and indirectly through local friendship networks and participation in local non-church-related groups. If participation in local groups is considered one of the indicators of community involvement, their study provides

empirical support for the relationship between church attendance and community participation. At the same time, local church attendance appears to provide individuals opportunities to create and maintain local ties. Church activity is often considered to provide social resources on which volunteering depends, especially for blacks, when volunteering involves church-related activities, community-action groups, work-related organizations, and political groups (Sundeen 1992). Research by Musick et al. (2000), however, suggests that church attendance is not a generalizable social resource for either blacks or whites. According to Musick and his associates, church attendance has a positive effect on most kinds of volunteering, but when it comes to more secular forms, frequent church attendance changes to being a constraint on volunteering.

Age and Individual Community Involvement

Support for the positive association between age and some form of community involvement are inconsistent. Most studies report no significant relationship between the two (Dye, Goodman, Roth, Bley, and Jensen 1973; Karsada and Janowitz's 1974; Sampson 1988). A few, however, found a significant positive relationship (Rank and Voss 1982; England and Albrecht 1984; Chambre 1984; Goudy 1990), with one reporting a negative association (Chambre 1984). Given these findings, the relationship might be nonlinear. Findings from a study by Rank and Voss (1982) regarding the patterns of rural community involvement in the Upper Great Lakes Region suggest that age has a significant positive effect on involvement. England and Albrecht (1984), in their investigation of boomtowns also report that age has a significant positive effect on resident participation in formal organizations. Studying rural Iowa communities, Goudy (1990), also found that the relationship between age and organizational memberships was strongly positive.

Yet, Sampson's (1988) analysis using British residents shows no significant association between age and participation in local organizations. Karsada and Janowitz's (1974) study based on the British sample also indicates that membership in formal organizations inside the community has no significant association with older age. Findings regarding age as a determinant of elderly volunteering behavior are equally inconsistent. The data gathered in the St. Louis Jewish Community Centers Association, an agency with an Older Adult Department of 1,100 members, failed to demonstrate any significant differences between volunteers and nonvolunteers (Dye, Goodman, Roth, Bley, and Jensen 1973). Conversely, Chambre's (1984) study found that individuals aged 60 and older volunteered less often than those in the general population. Whereas approximately 1 in 4 Americans had done some type of formal volunteer work in 1974, only 15.7 percent of all those 60 and over were defined as volunteers (1984). Furthermore, Chambre's (1984) regression analysis, using only those aged 60 and over, shows that age had a significant negative association with volunteering.

Nevertheless, interpreting the statistically significant association between age and community organization membership or volunteering in a cross-sectional sample used in all the cited studies requires caution. This is because the effect could be a combination of cohort, age, and possibly period effects. For example, Chambre's findings about older individuals volunteering significantly less cannot be interpreted solely as an age effect or life-course development. In the absence of panel data, one cannot easily rule out the possibilities of other effects (cohort and period effects) to explain differences between age groups. The positive association between age and community organization membership, and the negative association between age and volunteering in old age may be thought to represent cohort or generational differences.

Another view is that a great number of elderly volunteers may be volunteers who became elderly, meaning that their involvement may be a

continuation of behavior patterns established earlier in life (Chambre 1984:297). This theory is supported by the results of a study by Dye et al. (1973), that demonstrates the continuity of past patterns of participation in organizations as being the central variable differentiating volunteers and nonvolunteers. It might be that a person's past interest, attitudes, and activities continue through life (Dye et al. 1973). This finding is noteworthy in the sense that it can aid in the argument for the relative weakness of age effect in predicting volunteering activities over the life course. It further implies that the relationship between age and volunteering in cross-sectional data may reflect the minimal effect of getting older.

Instead, inconsistent results regarding the effect of age on both community involvement and volunteering are largely attributable to cohort effects and period effects that are compounded with the age effect and the researchers' inability to disentangle the factors, especially in the absence of panel data. Another reason for the inconsistent results is that the relationship between age and social participation, whether it is community involvement or volunteering, is possibly curvilinear or nonlinear.

Other Factors Related to Individual Community Involvement

The population size of a community may influence individual community involvement given Smith's (1994) discovery that a smaller population size tends to predict a significantly greater volunteer participation. Many studies, however, found no support for the relationship between population size and organizational membership. In their British sample, Karsada and Janowitz (1974) did not find any significant influence of the population size and density of a community on the resident membership in formal community organizations. Again, Sampson's (1988) study in Britain did not find any effect of urbanization or density on individual participation in community organizations. Based on data from rural

Iowa communities, Goudy (1990) also found that population size and density do not relate to the number of organizational memberships held by a respondent, while population size and density are negatively associated with the proportion of people known. This suggests a possibility of an indirect effect of population size and density on individual community involvement. To focus on the explanations driven by the rational choice and social capital theory, and the age-stratification perspective, population size will be considered a control variable for purposes of the present study.

On the basis of Luloff and Swanson's (1995) claim regarding sexism and racism, individual sociodemographic characteristics such as sex and race may be related to individual community involvement. Most studies concerning community participation found no significant difference between men and women except a study of residents in three communities by Beggs et al. (1996), which found that men were more likely than women to belong to community groups. As to patterns of volunteering, a number of studies have found no differences between volunteers and nonvolunteers in terms of sex, but the results of Chambre's (1984) study utilizing a representative sample indicate that gender was a significant predictor of volunteering. Women generally volunteer more frequently than men at all stages of the life cycle (Chambre 1984). In Chambre's representative sample, male retirees volunteered almost half as often as female retirees (Chambre 1984).

Beggs et al. (1996) report no significant relationship between race and membership in community groups. On the other hand, racial difference is found in volunteering. Hayghe's (1991) analysis of data from the Current Population Survey shows that blacks and Hispanics were less likely than whites to report volunteer activity. Musick, Wilson, and Bynum (2000), who have analyzed the data taken from a panel survey based on a multistage stratified area probability sample of 3,617 respondents to study volunteering, found that whites volunteer more than blacks. They sampled blacks and persons older than 60 at twice the

rate of whites younger than 60 in order to conduct comparisons by age and race. According to their analysis, black Americans are less likely than whites to be asked to volunteer and less likely to accept the invitation if it is made. The researchers contend that black Americans tend to have more social and cultural resources than whites who tend to have more human capital relative to their black counterparts. Musick and his associates (2000) argue that black Americans' advantage in social and cultural resources partially compensates for their shortage of human capital. The authors used education, income, and functional health to measure human capital or personal resources. Social resources were measured by the frequency of informal social interactions, and cultural resources were conceptualized as religiosity and values. Findings from Musick et al's research indicate that the effect of race on volunteering may become smaller when human capital, social, and cultural resources are controlled. Their findings therefore suggest the significance of human, social, and cultural resources over the racial factor in determining volunteering outcome. Nonetheless, the authors explain that there remain racial differences in the opportunity structure for volunteering, considering the finding that blacks are less often asked than whites. This view supports Luloff and Swanson's (1995) claim that racism is one of the structural and cultural barriers to democratic participation in community affairs.

Figure 1 below represents the model for individual community involvement that summarizes theoretical reasoning and the findings described earlier. The model does not include race because of incomplete information on race in the data used for analysis.

Empirical evidence for the three propositions concerning the community-level community involvement will be reviewed below. One proposition involves the relationship between the structure of social ties in a community and community-level community involvement. Studies that examined the effect of social ties on community-level outcomes are reviewed to gain insights given the

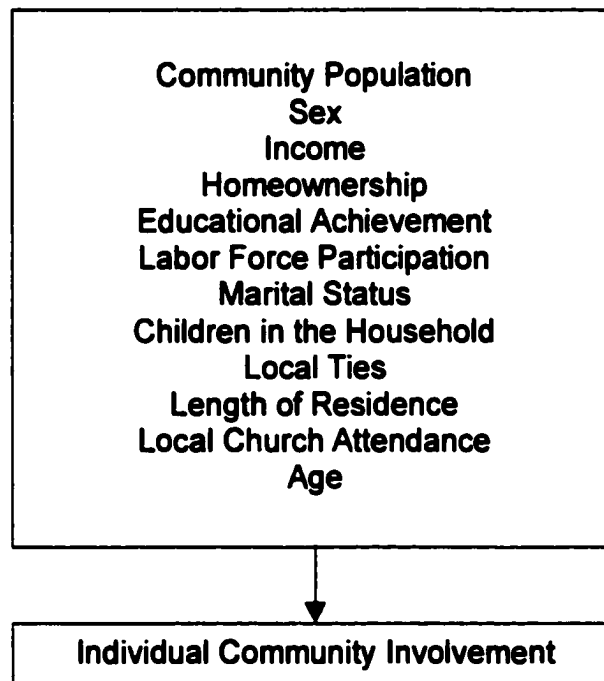


Figure 1. Factors That Influence Individual Community Involvement

lack of research involving community-level community involvement. The second concerns the effect of residential stability. No previous studies however have explored the relationship between residential stability and community-level community involvement. The third pertains to the impact of community population aging which has not been examined by quantitative studies. Next, I will briefly discuss other control factors that are not closely related with either social capital or age stratification explanations prior to suggesting a model predicting community-level community involvement.

The main reason for pursuing a community-level model is to understand better the effects of structural characteristics on a community's level of involvement. Structural characteristics such as the structure of social ties, residential stability, and proportion of population aging represent features of the

community that may predict community-level outcomes such as the community's rate of resident involvement.

Structure of Social Ties and Community-Level Community Involvement

Freudenburg (1986) uses the term "the density of acquaintanceship" to refer to a community's social structural characteristic. Density of acquaintanceships may represent "the average proportion of the people in a community known by the community's inhabitant" or "the community's ratio of actual ties to potential ties" (Freudenburg (1986:29-30). The concept of acquaintanceship density in a community is distinct from that of an individual's local ties in the sense that the former cannot be used to describe the latter. For example, just because a person lives in a community in which the average proportion of the local residents known by this resident is less than a quarter, one cannot assume that the person knows less than a quarter of the people in the community. At the same time, one can imagine that social organization in a community with a high level of acquaintanceship density may be different from social organization in a community with a low level of acquaintanceship density.

Putnam's (1993) study in Italy illustrates how place-based social networks contribute to social organization of the country. The northern Italian regions have developed highly modern governments that are very efficient and innovative, and very responsive to citizen needs. In southern regions, however, the governments are ineffective, unfriendly, and slow. Putnam (1993) hypothesized that the differences between the north and south have to do with levels of civic-citizenship (or civic virtue), and found that northern Italy has had a much stronger civic culture than the South for over 1000 years. In Putnam's (1993) words, some societies more closely resemble an ideal civic culture than others just as some individuals embody more components of a civic citizen than others. Putnam (1993) concluded that the norms and networks of civic engagement

(represented by voter turnout, newspaper readership, membership in choral societies and football clubs) powerfully affected the performance of representative government, whose levels of effectiveness varied greatly.

With a slightly different focus, Freudenburg (1986:29) has identified community outcomes associated with a low density of acquaintanceship at the community level, using the ethnographic surveys and secondary analyses of four communities in Colorado. Although the small number of the communities selected for study limits generalizability, one of the strengths of the study is the fact that his ethnographic observations are complemented by quantitative evidence available from survey research (a sample of 597 respondents with a response rate of 81 percent) and secondary sources covering a 10-year period. Operationalizing the density of acquaintanceship as an index of the kinds of local persons (such as grocer, carpenter, banker, mayor, etc.) not known by survey respondents, Freudenburg (1986) reports that a substantial decline in the density of acquaintanceship leads to significant consequences. He adds, however, that the strongest effects are not in the areas of psychological functioning. Significant consequences are found to be evident in what communities do with regard to control of deviance, socialization of the young, and care for the community's weaker members (Freudenburg 1986). Control of deviance is possible, as neighborly watchfulness is likely to result in effective informal social control. Moreover, a high density of acquaintanceship in a stable, small community allows socialization of the young to be a community effort as much as a familial one. Informal caring functions also seem to be provided both by small groups and by the community at large. In other words, Freudenburg's study suggests that the level of acquaintanceship density is associated with a positive community-level outcome, as predicted by social capital theory.

A larger-scale quantitative approach is found in a study by Sampson (1991) who used survey data collected in 1984 from a nationally representative sample of 11,030 residents from 526 localities in Great Britain to deal with the

issue of the macrosocial determinants of community social organization. His weighted least squares regression model at the community and neighborhood level provides empirical support for the thesis that local friendship and acquaintance ties influence the level of community social cohesion. The community-level measure of local friendship/acquaintanceship ties is operationalized as "the proportion of residents who reported that most of the people in the area were either friends or acquaintances" (Sampson 1991:49). Sampson (1991:44) claims that the social cohesion of a collectivity is a central concept in community-level theory and that it is not easily reduced to an individual-level attribute. In his study, community social cohesion was measured based on responses to these questions: "In some neighborhoods people do things together and try to help each other while in other areas people mostly go their own way. In general, what kind of neighborhood would you say you live; is it one where people mostly help each other, or where people mostly go their own way?" (Sampson 1991:50). Community social cohesion was defined as the proportion of residents who reported that their neighborhood was one where most of the people tried to help each other. Sampson's operationalization of community social cohesion is based on the patterns of informal helping behavior among residents, which reflect cooperation among residents. Again, this finding is consistent with social capital theory. Nevertheless, both Freudenburg's (1986) and Sampson's (1991) studies do not explore the effect of acquaintanceship density on the extent of community involvement.

Residential Stability and Community-Level Community Involvement

Sampson's 1988 study of British communities operationalizes residential stability as the percentage of residents brought up in the area. In another study in Great Britain, Sampson (1991) has measured the concept as the proportion of residents that lived in the neighborhood for 20 years or more.

Sampson's 1988 research indicates a significant relationship between residential stability and leisure activity patterns in locality. Activity patterns were measured by social participation and leisure activities for each night of the week by type of activity: (1) visiting friends and relatives; (2) leisure entertainment; (3) sporting events; and (4) organizational participation. The scoring was restricted to those events that the respondent reported walking to so that the events occurred within the local community. The structural measures refer to the percentage of residents who participated in each type of activity in the previous week. Of the four indicators of activity patterns, organizational participation is the only indicator that is remotely related to community involvement. Thus, this finding is an insufficient support for considering residential stability as a predictor for community involvement.

Community Population Aging and Community-Level Community Involvement

There is no empirical literature based on representative data that has dealt with community population aging as a structural determinant for community involvement in a community as a whole. Two of Sampson's (1988; 1991) studies have tested the effect of community age structure, but their focus is on the youth population. Sampson's (1988; 1991) community-level analysis in both studies takes into account the age composition of communities by using the proportion of households with children under 16 as one of the structural determinants for community social cohesion. The density of youth, however, does not have a significant relationship with social cohesion.

Other Factors Related to Community-Level Community Involvement

Overview of empirical studies has identified urbanism and the level of socioeconomic status as place-related characteristics that may be associated

with community-level community involvement. Sampson's (1991) research indicates support for the negative association between urbanism (measured by a scale based on the rural area, suburban community, and inner-city council estate indicators) and community social cohesion, which represents informal helping behavior in a community. Smith (1994) also notes that small, rural places generally appear to be more receptive to volunteer participation. Smith's (1994) research found that individual volunteer participation seems to be higher in neighborhoods with higher socioeconomic status. While neither social cohesion nor the receptiveness to volunteer participation fully coincides with the concept of community involvement, these findings suggest that the size of the community and financial and human capital (i.e., socioeconomic status) may be related with community-level community involvement.

Figure 2 describes the model for community-level community involvement built based on what theoretical arguments and empirical evidence suggest.

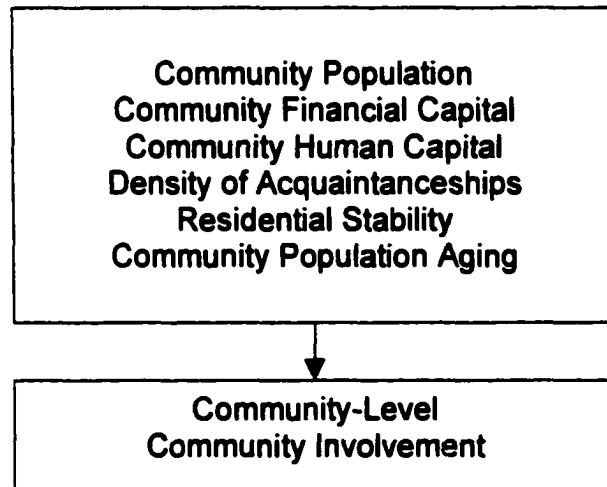


Figure 2. Factors That Influence Community-Level Community Involvement

The following is a review of ethnographic studies involving elderly people that validate the need to examine age groups by suggesting the notion of age stratification in a community setting. No quantitative research has yet been carried out to examine community involvement at the age group level. Thus, there is no generalizable empirical evidence to support the three propositions involving age group community involvement.

Age Group and Age Group Community Involvement

In all four elections of the Reagan/Bush/Clinton era, voting turnout varied by generation (Miller and Shanks 1996:217). This points to potential generational differences in the level of civic activity and possibly community involvement, which is a form of civic activity.

One ethnographic study provides a glimpse of age group differences among the elderly. Based on a panel of elderly living in the rural Appalachian community of "Colton," Rowles (1998:115) observed age cohort differences in values and expectations about community support. For example, the old-old in Colton tended to hold on to traditional values and expectations of community support while viewing their lives as grounded in the locality, while the young-old had adapted increasingly to a formal, service-oriented model of support for the frail. Given this age group difference in attitudes and behaviors, the old-old, the young-old, and the young may vary significantly in terms of their community involvement patterns.

Community and Age Group Community Involvement

Given the significance of place-based community as a context for age-based attitudes and roles, age group community involvement may vary by community type. For example, whether a community is rural town, small city, or

metropolitan area may influence the level of community involvement by any groups in the community.

Age Group Social Ties and Age Group Community Involvement

Rowles' (1998) observation in Colton reveals the significance of place-based social ties to the elderly as a group. He uses the term "social insideness" to describe patterns of interaction in Colton. He posits that social insideness for elders in the community involved immersion in mutually supported networks of age peers and younger caregivers (generally, middle-aged women outside the formal labor force and live near the elder) and participation in a "society of the old." Within this society of the old, there occur both face-to-face interaction and indirect contact over the telephone among members of an entire cohort of elders who had grown up and aged in the community (Rowles 1998:111). The sense of insideness for the elderly resulting from supportive networks of age peers can be understood as a form of social capital for the age group. The sense of insideness represents a group identity that is a consequence of closure in networks. The sense of insideness also reflects solidarity for the elderly in the community and may lead to the age group's involvement in common projects, including a community project. Nevertheless, Rowles' study does not directly link an age group's locality-based social relations with the age group's level of community involvement.

Rowles' (1998:110) ethnographic work in Colton reveals that a sense of "physical insideness" held by older residents originated from sheer length of residence and an intimate familiarity with the local landscape through repeated use over decades. The sense of physical insideness emerged as elders' patterns of daily life and community participation became routinized in both space and time (Rowles 1998:110). Based on this observation, one may speculate that the longer tenure of age group members would lead to a higher

level of age group community involvement through the place-based group identity shared by age group members.

Other Factors Related to Age Group Community Involvement

In addition to the factors pertaining to age stratification, embeddedness and social capital arguments, age group's financial capital (aggregate income) and human capital (aggregate educational achievement) may be related to age group community involvement based on the rational choice explanation for individual community involvement.

Factors identified as possible predictors of age group community involvement are shown in Figure 3.

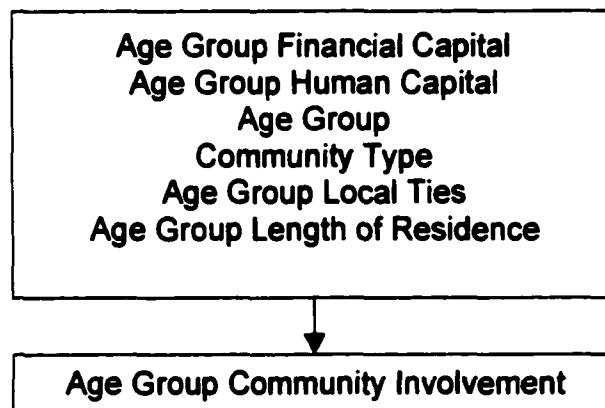


Figure 3. Factors That Influence Age Group Community Involvement

Summary of Empirical Literature on Community Involvement

The review of the empirical literature concerning community involvement reveals the existence of some support for the propositions predicting individual

membership in formal community organizations instead of actual citizen participation in community projects (Beggs, Hurlbert, and Haines 1996; Karsada and Janowitz 1974). There is insufficient empirical evidence for the propositions predicting community-level community involvement. Moreover, there exist no large-scale studies based on representative data that attempted to predict age group community involvement.

The proposition regarding individual community involvement based on expected personal benefits has been supported by many of the previous studies. The relationship between some form of involvement and income is found to be positive according to most studies. No study tested the effect of homeownership on community involvement. Findings suggest that educational achievement is a positive contributor to involvement and volunteering. Labor force participation is found to be a significant predictor for the degree of involvement in volunteering. There was no support for the effect of marital status or the presence of children in the household.

Existing findings tend to suggest support for the second proposition involving the amount of social ties and individual involvement, but the focus of existing research was not on community involvement. Length of residence is also identified as another factor that may contribute to involvement through group identity. Church attendance may be another contributor to individual involvement possibly through shared identity based on empirical findings concerning community attachment and volunteering.

Inconsistent evidence is found for the proposition regarding the association between age and individual community involvement. This may be due to the nonlinear relationship between the two variables, and membership in a certain age group can be used instead to determine the effect of age stratification.

There is insufficient evidence to support the community-level propositions although existing research involving social capital points to a possibility for a

positive effect of acquaintanceship density on community-level community involvement. Setting aside Sampson's 1988 and 1991 multilevel analyses that were based on the nationally representative British samples, one of the few community-level studies was Freudenburg's (1986) work in Colorado involving only four communities. Moreover, no empirical research based on representative data has considered community population aging as a predictor for the extent of a community's community involvement.

No large-scale studies have systematically analyzed the age-stratification of community involvement, the effect of place on an age group's extent of community involvement, or the relationship between age group local ties and age group community involvement. Previous observations of older age groups are based on ethnographic work in relatively small rural areas and therefore cannot be generalized to age groups in larger communities.

In addition to the need to perform quantitative analyses at the community as well as age group levels with the use of a representative sample in the United States, it is necessary to improve the individual-level analysis by reconceptualizing and reoperationalizing of community involvement. Rather than being operationalized as resident involvement in formal community organizations, community involvement needs to be understood as an actual act of voluntary participation by community members in the projects which are designed to enhance the common good of the community.

Research findings pertaining to the significant effect of individual socioeconomic characteristics such as income, education, and labor force status on community organizational membership or volunteering are generally consistent with rational choice explanations of individual participation in collective action in the sense that people are motivated by private gains when they get involved. Studies using social relational indicators measured by not only strong ties but also local acquaintanceships demonstrate the effect of social ties on resident interest in community affairs. Such findings are relevant to the

embeddedness perspective that emphasizes the impact of ongoing social relationships on shaping people's attitudes and behaviors. The positive effect of length of residence and local church attendance on community organization memberships support one of the proposed mechanisms involving social capital that shared situations lead to group identity or solidarity facilitating collaboration. Empirical literature on social capital, however, lacks community- and group-level analyses. The age-stratification aspect of community involvement patterns also remains unexplored.

The present study proposes the following hypotheses given the theoretical orientation presented here and the need to fill in the gaps in empirical literature.

Hypotheses

Predicting individual community involvement

The following hypotheses will be subject to controls of community population size and sex, whose effects are not explained by rational choice theory or social capital theory, so as to measure the effects of other predictor variables apart from differences in community involvement levels among communities and gender differences:

Hypothesis 1: The higher one's household income, the more likely one is to get involved in community projects.

Hypothesis 2: Those who own a home in the community are more likely to be involved in community projects than people who do not.

Hypothesis 3: Individuals with higher education are more likely to be involved in community projects.

Hypothesis 4: Those who are in the labor force are more likely to be involved in community projects.

Hypothesis 5: Married people are more likely to be involved in community projects than people who are not married.

Hypothesis 6: People who live with children are more likely to be involved in community projects than people who do not.

Hypothesis 7: The amount of local ties that one has is positively associated with one's level of community involvement.

Hypothesis 8: The longer one's length of residence, the more likely one is to be involved in community projects.

Hypothesis 9: Those who attend a local church are more likely to be involved in community projects than those who do not.

Hypothesis 10: The extent of an individual's community involvement will vary by age.

Predicting community-level community involvement

The following hypotheses will be subject to controls of population size, financial and human capital in a community so as to subtract the effects of urbanism and the socioeconomic status of communities and identify the unique effects of other factors with theoretical relevance to the present study:

Hypothesis 11: The extent of community involvement at the community level is positively associated with the density of acquaintanceships of a community.

Hypothesis 12: The extent of community-level community involvement is positively related with a community's degree of residential stability.

Hypothesis 13: The higher the proportion of elderly population in a community, the greater the extent of community involvement at the community level.

Predicting age group community involvement

The following hypotheses will be subject to controls of age group financial capital and age group human capital so that the variance attributable to individual-level socioeconomic characteristics would be subtracted:

Hypothesis 14: The level of age group community involvement will vary depending on the age group (Old-Old Group, Young-Old Group, and Young Group).

Hypothesis 15: The level of age group community involvement will vary depending on the type of community (rural town, small city, or metropolitan city) where members of the age group reside.

Hypothesis 16: The level of age group community involvement is positively associated with the average amount of local ties that age group members have.

Hypothesis 17: The level of age group community involvement is positively associated with the average length of residence of age group members.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS

The Data

Data from a mail survey collected in 1994 and 1997 as part of the Rural Development Initiative project were utilized for analysis. The main purpose of the project was "to assess the social and economic conditions of Iowa's rural communities" (Ryan, Terry, and Woebke 1995). Of the three research-extension teams at Iowa State University which are interdisciplinary in structure, the community development team collected the data used in the present study to study community viability. The 1994 data were collected from 99 rural communities, and the 1997 data from 15 urban communities.

As for the 1994 data, sampling procedures included a stratified random selection of 1 community between 500 and 10,000 in population (to be referred to as Ruraltown hereafter) in each of the 99 counties in Iowa in the first stage. Of the total of 396 communities between 500 and 10,000 in population, 19 communities were excluded as they were adjacent to metropolitan cities. The selected 99 communities represent a little over one-quarter of the remaining 377 communities. In the second stage, a random sample of 150 households was drawn from each of the 99 communities. Within each household, the head or a randomly selected co-head if present was asked to complete and return the questionnaire. Half of the letters accompanying the questionnaire requested the participation of the male head or co-head. When there was no head or co-head of the sex requested, the letter asked the household head present to complete and return the questionnaire. Two weeks after mailing the initial questionnaire, follow-up post cards were sent to all of the households, and replacement questionnaires were sent to those who had not responded two weeks following the postcard. The response rate was 73 percent as 10,798 of the 14,850

questionnaires were completed and returned. Response rates for individual communities ranged from 62 to 83 percent.

In 1997, a multistage, stratified random sample was selected for a statewide survey of Iowa urban residents. The first stage involved a stratified random selection of 11 communities among the 22 towns in Iowa between 10,000 and 50,000 in population (to be referred to as Smallcity). In addition, four of Iowa's eight metropolitan communities (to be referred to as Metrocity) were selected at random. Thus, 50 percent of Smallcity communities and 50 percent of Metrocities were selected. Next, 250 households were randomly chosen from each of the 99 small cities and 500 from each of the 4 metropolitan centers. The increase of the size of the sample per community is to correspond to the larger population size of small cities and metropolitan centers and to compensate for a possibly lower response rate. A procedure identical to the data collection in 1994 was used. The response rate was 61 percent with a total of 2,901 questionnaires completed and returned. Response rates ranged from 58 to 71 percent for small cities with an average of 64 percent, and 53 to 61 percent for metropolitan cities with an average of 57 percent.

Altogether, 13,699 of the 19,600 residents receiving a questionnaire participated for an overall response rate of 70 percent (Ryan and Grewe 1998). For purposes of this study, 7 cases have been excluded from the data set as they were completed by respondents who were younger than eighteen years of age at the time of the survey, leaving 13,692 cases for analysis.

Table 1 summarizes the main characteristics of the sample by community type. The median age of the respondents is 52 years, and 31 percent of them were at least 65 years of age at the time of the survey. The youngest respondent was 18 years old with the oldest being 98 years of age. Ruraltown citizens were older on average than citizens from either Smallcity or Metrocity (54, 49, and 45 years of age, respectively). While almost one-third of Ruraltown respondents

Table 1. Sample Characteristics by Community Type (n=13,692)

Characteristics	Total	Ruraltown (500 -10,000)	Smallcity (10,000 - 50,000)	Metrocity (50,000 +)
Number of Communities	114	99	11	4
Number of Respondents	13,692	10,791	1,765	1,136
Median Age	52	54	49	45
Percent Aged 65 and Over	31	31	27	20
Percent Female	55	55	56	57
Percent "White"	96	-	97	95
Percent with a Bachelor's Degree	20	16	33	41
Percent Married	68	70	64	57
Mean Number of Children in the Household	.7	.8	.6	.6
Percent Fully Employed	50	49	53	57
Percent with Household Income Above \$30,000	52	48	64	62
Percent of Homeowners	82	84	79	71
Percent Attending Local Church	72	73	69	72
Median Length of Residence (Years)	28	32	22	22
Percent Knowing At Least Half of Adults in Community (Ruraltown) or At Least 100 Adults in Community (Smallcity and Metrocity)	55	55	54	56

were 65 years old or older, about one-fourth of Smallcity respondents and one-fifth of Metrocity respondents fell into this age category (Ryan and Grewe 1998). Of the 13,692 respondents, 7,403 were women, constituting 55 percent of the total sample. Smallcities and Metrocities had a slightly higher proportion of female respondents compared to Ruraltowns.

Ruraltown respondents were not asked the question about racial and ethnic background. The proportion of "white" respondents was marginally higher in Smallcities than in Metrocities. Ninety-seven percent of the Smallcity respondents and ninety-five percent of the Metrocity respondents claimed to be "white," representing the predominantly "white" population in Iowa.

Thirty-seven percent of the respondents completed their formal education with a high school diploma. Twenty-three percent received some college education without a degree, and twelve percent completed their formal education with a Bachelor's degree. Those who received a graduate or professional degree constituted eight percent of the respondents. About four in ten Metrocity residents and one-third of Smallcity residents have earned a Bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree, but Ruraltown residents more often had completed their formal education with a high school diploma (40 percent).

The majority of respondents (over two-thirds) were married. Fifteen percent were widowed, nine percent divorced or separated, and the remaining eight percent never married. Ruraltown had the highest marriage rate while Metrocity had the lowest (70 percent and 57 percent, respectively).

The average number of children living in the same household was less than 1 child (.7). The average was slightly higher for Ruraltown respondents and slightly lower for their urban counterparts (.6).

Approximately 60 percent of the respondents were in the labor force, either on a full-time basis (50 percent) or on a part-time basis (10 percent). Thirty percent of the respondents were retired. Ruraltown residents were more likely to be retired (31percent vs. 27 percent in Smallcity and 22 percent in

Metrocity). Furthermore, Ruraltown residents have lower levels of full-time employment than either Smallcity or Metrocity (49 percent, 53 percent, and 57 percent, respectively).

The median household income of the sample is between 30,000 and 39,999 dollars. Even when the three-year difference in time between the two data collection points is considered, Ruraltown residents had significantly lower earnings compared to their urban counterparts, with the greatest disparity in the upper income range (Ryan and Grewe 1998). While only 11 percent of Ruraltown respondents reported household earnings in 1993 to be at least 60,000 dollars, 26 percent of both Smallcity and Metrocity households fell into this income category. This can be due, in part, to Ruraltown's higher portion of retired persons and lower average wages and earnings.

A majority of the respondents has relatively close ties to their community as demonstrated in part by their high homeownership rate, local church attendance, length of residence, and local ties. Ruraltown (84 percent) and Smallcity residents (79 percent) have the highest rate of homeownership relative to Metrocity residents (71 percent). On average, Ruraltown respondents lived in their community for 32 years, while their urban counterparts, in general, lived a substantially lower number of years in their community. With regard to church attendance, there is little difference among Ruraltown, Smallcity, and Metrocity residents. In general, about seven in ten people in the sample attended church in their own community. In terms of acquaintanceship, a little over half of Ruraltown respondents knew at least half of the adults in the community by name. Meanwhile, more than half of the respondents from Smallcity and Metrocity knew at least 100 adults in community by name.

Table 2 describes the major characteristics of the sample by age group. Dividing the sample into multiple groups according to the age of a subject is not a simple task, mainly because age is a continuous measure. To be consistent with

Table 2. Sample Characteristics by Age Group (n=342)

Characteristics	Total	Young (18-54)	Young-Old (55-74)	Old-Old (74-98)
Number of Respondents	13,363	7,185	4,147	2,031
Number of Ruraltown Residents	10,491	5,375	3,397	1,719
Number of Smallcity Residents	1,747	1,049	480	218
Number of Metrocity Residents	1,125	761	270	94
Median Age	52	40	65	80
Percent Female	55	53	55	65
Percent "White"	96	95	98	97
Percent with a Bachelor's Degree	20	27	13	9
Percent Married	68	76	71	34
Mean Number of Children in the Household	.7	1.2	.1	.0
Percent Fully Employed	50	78	27	2
Percent with Household Income Above \$30,000	52	66	41	17
Percent of Homeowners	82	78	91	79
Percent Attending Local Church	72	66	77	85
Median Length of Residence (Years)	28	18	40	52
Percent Knowing At Least Half of Adults in Community (Ruraltown) or At Least 100 Adults in Community (Smallcity and Metrocity)	55	54	59	53

the age-stratification framework, partitions of the sample have to be based on socially significant aspects of people and roles. Because the numbers of strata and their age-related boundaries differ from one time and place to another (Riley 1976:190), pieces of age-based legislation and statistics in the United States can serve as indicators of ages. Policy and incentives begin to discourage paid employment near age 55, and law (until recently) tended to terminate paid employment at age 65 (Kahn 1994). In the 10-year age-groups beginning with age 55, the proportion of people in paid employment decreases from 53 percent to 22 percent, and to 4 percent among men and women aged 75 or more (1994). In fact, demographers often use the 10-year age-groups beginning with age 55. To ensure a sufficient number of cases in one age-group within one community, the respondents in the present study are classified into three age-groups: 18 to 54 (Young Group), 55 to 74 (Young-Old Group), and 75 and older (Old-Old Group).

For purposes of the present analysis, age groups are considered as groups in a community. This means that there is one Young Group, one Young-Old Group, and one Old-Old Group in each community. Because there are 114 communities with 3 age groups per community, there are 342 age groups overall.

More than half of the sample belong to the Young Groups. Young-Old Groups constitute less than one-third of the total sample, and Old-Old Groups represent about fifteen percent of the sample. While constituting approximately 16 percent of Ruraltown respondents (1,719 of 10,491), Old-Old respondents represent only about 8 percent (94 of 1,125) of the respondents who live in Metrocity.

The Young Group has a median age of 40 years, indicating the concentration of older members within the group. The Old-Old Group's median age of 80 reflects the concentration of younger Old-Old members.

There are substantially more females in the Old-Old Group, in comparison to the Young Group and the Young-Old Group. Sixty-five percent of the Old-Old

Group members was female while the rate was fifty-five percent for the total sample.

The Young-Old Group from Smallcities and Metrocities has the largest proportion of respondents who considered themselves as "white" (98 percent) and the Young Group from Smallcities and Metrocities has the smallest proportion of respondents who identified themselves as "white" (95 percent). Ninety-seven percent of the Old-Old from Smallcities and Metrocities described themselves as "white."

Over one-quarter of Young respondents had a Bachelor's degree, but only nine percent of Old-Old individuals obtained a Bachelor's degree. Thirteen percent of Young-Old Group members had a Bachelor's degree, falling in between the two groups. This generational disparity exists because college training is more common among younger generations.

The older segment of the population has a much lower rate of marriage, mainly due to more frequent widowhood rather than divorce, separation, or singlehood. Of the respondents who are Old-Old, 34 percent were married, whereas roughly three-quarters of their younger counterparts were married. Another clear form of generational difference is found in the number of children in the household. Old-Old respondents in general had no child living in the same household, but Young members typically had one child living with them.

Not surprisingly, major differences between older and younger generations exist in labor force participation. Overall, eight out of every ten people who are 65 years of age or older had retired. Merely two percent of Old-Old individuals had full-time employment while more than three-quarters of Young people had full-time employment. Young-Old members had a substantially lower rate of full-time employment (27 percent) compared to Young members.

Reflecting the minimal labor force participation by the elderly, household income reported shows a large gap from what their younger generations

reported. The median household income for the sub-sample of elderly respondents (65 and older) was between 10,000 and 19,999 dollars, 20,000 dollars less than the household earnings for their non-elderly counterparts. Only 17 percent of the Old-Old households made at least 30,000 dollars, contrasting the fact that 66 percent of the Young households fall into the same income category. Forty-one percent of the Young-Old's belonged to the same income category.

Homeownership rate is higher among the Young-Old, as nine out of ten of them owned their home, but the generational difference is not substantial. Almost eight out of ten Young and Old-Old members owned their homes. Local church attendance is the highest among the Old-Old (85 percent), followed by the Young-Old (77 percent) and the Young (66 percent). Mainly due to its age-related aspect, the length of residence for the Old-Old is the longest (52 years on average) and the shortest for Young (18 years on average). There is no substantial difference among the three age groups in terms of local ties, although the Young-Old have the largest amount of local ties.

Measures

The means and standard deviations for the study variables are shown in Table 3. The following explains how the variables are operationalized.

Individual-level measures

Individual community involvement: Two questions are used to measure community involvement at the individual level: "During the past year, have you participated in any community improvement project in (Community Name) such as a volunteer project or fund-raising effort?" (1=Yes, 0=Not "Yes"); "In general, how would you describe your level of involvement in local community

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations (SD's) of Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	n
<i>Individual Traits:</i>			
Individual Community Involvement	.00	1.00	13,492
Household Income	3.93	2.04	12,212
Homeownership	.82	.38	13,397
Educational Achievement	3.85	1.57	13,365
Labor Force Participation	.50	.50	12,753
Marital Status	.68	.47	13,400
Children in the Household	.65	1.09	13,296
Local Ties	2.76	1.06	13,692
Length of Residence	30.50	21.74	13,304
Local Church Attendance	.72	.45	13,411
Age	54.00	17.73	13,363
Sex	.55	.50	13,402
<i>Community Traits:</i>			
Community-Level Community Involvement	.05	2.06	114
Density of Acquaintanceships	54.51	16.76	114
Residential Stability	30.94	6.09	114
Community Population Aging	15.64	5.55	114
Community Population (Log)	7.62	1.36	114
Community Financial Capital	50.47	11.12	114
Community Human Capital	18.29	10.20	114
<i>Age Group Traits:</i>			
Age Group Community Involvement	-.13	1.71	342
Age Group Local Ties	53.92	19.14	342
Age Group Length of Residence	36.44	13.90	342
Age Group Financial Capital	40.36	23.28	342
Age Group Human Capital	15.51	12.03	342

improvement activities and events?" (1= Very active, 2= Somewhat active, 3= Not very active, 4= Not at all active). The responses to the second question are reverse-coded so that a larger number represents a greater level of involvement. Factor scores are then created using these two sets of responses, so that one score represents an individual's level of involvement. The value of Cronbach's alpha (standardized) for this two-item scale is .68. This score is used as a general indicator of community involvement that reflects both actual involvement in some type of projects as well as the respondent's perceived level of involvement.

Household income: Respondents were asked to report their gross household income from all sources, before taxes, for 1993 (Ruraltown residents) or for 1996 (Smallcity and Metrocity residents) by selecting one from eight ranges (1=\$9,999 or less; 2=\$10,000-19,999; 3=\$20,000-29,999; 4=\$30,000-39,999; 5=\$40,000-49,999; 6=\$50,000-59,999; 7=\$60,000-74,999; and 8=\$75,000 or more).

Home ownership: Respondents were asked if they own or rent their residence. Response categories were "Own," "Rent," or "Have some other arrangement." The variable has been recoded so that one is assigned to "own" and zero to the remaining two categories. The mean score is .82.

Educational achievement: Respondents were asked what was their highest level of formal education attained. There were a total of seven response choices (1=Less than 9th grade; 2=9th to 12th grade, no diploma; 3=High school graduate (including equivalency); 4=Some college, no diploma; 5=Associate degree; 6=Bachelor's degree, and 7=Graduate or professional degree).

Labor force participation: Responses to the employment status question have been recoded to have one represent employment on a full-time basis and zero if not employed on a full-time basis. The mean score for labor force participation is .50.

Marital status: Marital status measures whether or not a person is married. Original response categories were one for "Married," two for "Divorced/separated," three for "Never married," and four for "Widowed." The answers have been recoded by assigning zero for statuses indicating the respondent is not currently married. The variables' mean is .68.

Children in the household: Respondents were asked, "How many of the people living in your household are under 18 years of age?" The mean number of children reported is .65.

Local ties: Local ties for Ruraltown residents are measured based on responses to the following question: "About what proportion of the adults living in (Community Name) would you say you know by name?" (1=None or very few of them; 2=Less than half of them; 3=About half of them; 4=Most of them; 5=All of them). Local ties for Smallcity or Metrocity residents are measured based on responses to the following question: "About how many adults living in (Community Name) would you say you know by name?" (1=Less than 10; 2=10-50; 3=50-100; 4=100-200; 5=200-300; 6=More than 300). The Smallcity and Metrocity responses with 6 categories were reduced to 5 categories by combining codes 2 and 3 so that the proportions of the response categories would approximate those similar to the rural sample. Since the proportions were similar by community type, responses to these two questions were merged to create one variable.²

Length of residence: The number of years respondents reported they had lived in the area measures the length of residence. The mean number of years in the community is 30.5.

² In the rural sample, 9 percent selected the response category 1 (none or very few of them), 35 percent 2 (less than half of them), 30 percent 3 (about half of them), 24 percent 4 (most of them), and 1 percent 5 (all of them). Among Smallcity respondents, 5 percent chose the response category 1 (less than 10), 40 percent 2 (10-50) or 3 (50-100), 23 percent 4 (100-200), 14 percent 5 (200-300), and 18 percent 6 (more than 300). In the Metro sample, 3 percent chose 1 (less than 10), 41 percent 2 (10-50) or 3 (50-100), 23 percent 4 (100-200), 13 percent 5 (200-300), and 20 percent 6 (more than 300).

Local church attendance: Respondents were asked if they stay mostly in the home community to go to church. The coded value of 1 has been given to responses from people who go to local church, and zero to responses from those who do not. The mean score of local church attendance is .72.

Age: Respondents were simply asked their age as of their last birthday and the mean age of the sample is 54 years.

Sex: The responses of the question about sex have been recoded so that one represents female and zero indicates male. The mean score is .55, meaning there are more (55 percent) female respondents.

Community-level measures

Community-level community involvement: Community-level community involvement is represented by z-scores that are computed based on individual community involvement. Each z-score is created by dividing a community mean by standard errors within a community. The use of z-scores is to stabilize the differing variance of responses across communities largely created by the differing number of respondents from community to community.

Density of acquaintanceships: Density of acquaintanceships is measured based on the same questions used to measure individual local ties. The proportion of respondents in a community who said they knew at least half of the adults living in community by name is used to operationalize density of acquaintanceships for Ruraltown since about half of the Ruraltown respondents represents this group. Density of acquaintanceships for Smallcity or Metrocity is measured by the proportion of respondents in a community who said they knew at least 100 of the adults living in community by name. A little over half of the Smallcity and Metrocity respondents fell into this group.

Residential stability: Residential stability in a community is measured by the mean number of years residents lived in the community.

Community population aging: For Ruraltown, the proportion of the respondents who were 75 years old or older by the summer of 1994 is used as a measure for the community's population aging. In Smallcity or Metrocity, the proportion of the respondents who were 75 years old or older by the summer of 1997 is used to represent the community's level of population aging. The mean score of community population aging is 15.64.

Community population: The 1996 population estimates for communities are used for the community population variable. Because of their skewed distribution, the data have been transformed into natural logarithms.

Community financial capital: Community financial capital is measured by the percentage of the respondents in a community whose household income is at least 30,000 dollars in either 1993 (for Ruraltown residents) or 1996 (for Smallcity or Metrocity residents). About half of the respondents reported their household income as 30,000 dollars or more.

Community human capital: Community human capital is operationalized as the percentage of the respondents in a community with a Bachelor's degree. The cut-off point is based on the finding that adults with a college degree are more likely to volunteer (Hayghe 1991).

Age group-level measures

Age group community involvement: Community involvement at the age group level is measured by z-scores that are computed based on individual community involvement. Each z-score is computed by dividing an age group mean by standard errors within an age group. The use of z-scores is to stabilize the fluctuating variance of responses across age groups mainly caused by the number of respondents that varies not only from one age group to another within the same community but also across communities.

Age group local ties: The same rationale and the same questions used for operationalizing density of acquaintanceships is applied to the measurement of age group local ties. Local ties for age groups in a Ruraltown community are measured as the proportion of age group members who said they knew at least half of adults living in community by name. As for the measure of age group local ties in Smallcity or Metrocity, the proportion of age group members who said they knew 100 or more adults living in community by name is utilized.

Age group length of residence: The length of residence for an age group is represented by the mean number of years that the respondents of the age group lived in their community.

Age group financial capital: Age group financial capital is measured by the percentage of the respondents within an age group whose household income was at least 30,000 dollars in either 1993 (for Ruraltown residents) or 1996 (for Smallcity or Metrocity residents) based on the median household income for the sample

Age group human capital: Age group human capital is operationalized as the percentage of the respondents within an age group who held a Bachelor's degree, based on the positive association between a college degree and volunteering.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

Data analysis at three different levels (individual-, community-, and age group-levels) is performed to determine whether the data support the proposed hypotheses regarding individual community involvement, community-level community involvement, or age group community involvement.

Individual Level Analysis

Intercorrelations among all study variables for individual level analysis are displayed in Table 4. Correlation coefficients for all the hypothesized relationships are statistically significant with p-values less than .01. The direction of each relationship is also consistent with the hypotheses. Household income, owning a home, educational achievement, labor force participation, being married, and the number of children in the household are positively and significantly correlated with individual community involvement supporting the hypotheses that represent the personal benefit argument. Of all the study variables, local ties and local church attendance are most strongly correlated with individual involvement ($r=.33$ and $r=.23$, respectively). These two relationships along with the relationship between length of residence and involvement are consistent with the hypotheses based on social capital theory and the embeddedness argument. Among the control variables, being female is not significantly correlated with community involvement, but the size of community population is significantly and negatively associated with community involvement ($r=-.07$).

Age is highly correlated with most of the other independent variables, largely reflecting age-based traits of individuals. Labor force participation is negatively related with age, with a coefficient of $-.60$, indicating the prevalence of

Table 4. Correlations among Study Variables for Individual-Level Analysis (n=13,692)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Individual Community Involvement	1.00												
2 Community Population (Log)	-.07**	1.00											
3 Sex	-.01	.01	1.00										
4 Household Income	.16**	.19**	-.16**	1.00									
5 Homeownership	.11**	-.09**	-.06**	.22**	1.00								
6 Educational Achievement	.16**	.25**	-.01*	.39**	-.02*	1.00							
7 Labor Force Participation	.05**	.05**	-.25**	.39**	-.01	.28**	1.00						
8 Marital Status	.13**	-.08**	-.21**	.42**	.28**	.08**	.16**	1.00					
9 Children in the Household	.13**	-.02*	-.04**	.22**	.03**	.20**	.30**	.27**	1.00				
10 Local Ties	.33**	.02*	-.01	.09**	.10**	.01	.03**	.05**	.01	1.00			
11 Length of Residence	.04**	-.12**	-.01	-.21**	.17**	-.33**	-.34**	-.11**	-.31**	.24**	1.00		
12 Local Church Attendance	.23**	.03**	.05**	-.03**	.07**	-.05**	-.11**	.01	-.03**	.23**	.26**	1.00	
13 Age	-.04**	-.13**	.06**	-.32**	.15**	-.37**	-.60**	-.21**	-.51**	.02	.59**	.19**	1.00

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

retirement in old age. Other age-related variables are length of residence ($r=.59$) and the number of children in the household ($r=.51$). Reflecting the higher chance of being widowed in old age, marital status and age have a negative correlation ($r=-.21$). There exists a negative correlation between age and household income ($r=-.32$), and being married is positively associated with household income ($r=.42$). These relatively high correlation coefficients between age and other individual traits support the core assumption of the age-stratification perspective. That is, people and people's roles are stratified by age.

Table 5 shows the results of multiple regression analysis to account for the effects of selected independent variables on individual community involvement while controlling for community population size and the sex of an individual along with the controls. Among control variables, community population is found to be negatively associated with individual community involvement. The effect is negative, meaning that individuals living in communities with a smaller population are more involved than their counterparts in larger communities.

Equation 1 concerns the first 6 hypotheses derived from the personal benefit argument. Regression coefficients in Equation 1 indicate that all of the predictor variables except labor force participation are significantly and positively associated with individual community involvement. More specifically, the level of household income, homeownership, educational achievement, being married, and the number of children in the household are all positively related to individual community involvement. These relationships support the rational choice explanation of individual community involvement based on expected personal benefits. According to rational choice theory, those who have a vested interest in the community through financial stakes such as a house, career, or close relationships such as the family living in the community are more likely to be involved in community improvement projects, mainly because they are induced by private returns. The significant, negative coefficient for labor force

Table 5. Regression Coefficients for Models Predicting Individual Community Involvement (n=13,692)

Independent Variable	Equation 1		Equation 2		Equation 3	
	Beta	t-value	Beta	t-value	Beta	t-value
Community Population (Log)	-.12	-12.2**	-.13	-14.4**	-.13	-14.1**
Sex	.01	.8	.00	-.2	.00	.2
Household Income	.11	9.1**	.09	8.3**	.09	8.4**
Home Ownership	.07	6.9**	.03	3.5**	.03	2.7**
Educational Achievement	.14	13.6**	.15	15.4**	.16	15.8**
Labor Force Participation	-.06	-5.4**	-.04	-4.2**	-.02	-1.9
Marital Status	.03	2.7**	.02	2.3*	.03	2.7**
Children in the Household	.08	7.5**	.08	8.1**	.09	9.1**
Local Ties	-	-	.28	30.3**	.28	30.6**
Length of Residence	-	-	-.01	-.7	-.03	-2.4*
Local Church Attendance	-	-	.18	19.8**	.18	19.3**
Age	-	-	-	-	.06	4.2**
Adjusted R Square	.07**		.19**		.20**	
F Change	98.2**		588.4**		17.3**	

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

participation suggests that the relationship is confounded with age, given its loss of statistical significance in Equation 3 with an introduction of the age variable. Although the regression coefficients of the five predictors in Equation 1 are statistically significant, the value of adjusted R square for the model is only .07. This value is statistically significant (at p-value less than .01), but one can hardly consider Equation 1 a good model given the small variance the independent

variables are able to explain. For this reason, exploring the alternative explanation of community involvement based on social relations is necessary.

Equation 2 introduces local ties, length of residence, and local church attendance to identify the effects of social relations on individual community involvement. Results of running the second model demonstrate that the effects of social relations on individual community involvement add significantly to the effects of the earlier predictors related to personal benefits. Consistent with the seventh hypothesis, local ties are found to be a strong predictor of individual community involvement, with a regression coefficient of .28. The eighth hypothesis involving length of residence is not supported by the data, but local church attendance is found to be another strong predictor of individual involvement as indicated by the regression coefficient of .18, supporting the ninth hypothesis. When local ties, length of residence, and local church attendance are introduced to the model, the adjusted R square value improves from .07 in Equation 1 to .19 in Equation 2. This substantial improvement is evidenced by the significant change in F value of 588.4.

The effect of age on individual community involvement in Equation 3 is found to be statistically significant, with a regression coefficient of .06, after taking into account other factors relating to personal benefit and social relation arguments. The effect of age is positive, showing that older individuals are more involved than their younger counterparts. This finding contradicts the zero-order correlation coefficient where age is negatively and significantly correlated with individual community involvement ($r = -.04$). The reversal of the direction of the relationship is attributable to the fact that age is significantly correlated with other independent variables in Equation 3. As discussed earlier, age is significantly associated with most of the sociodemographic characteristics of individuals. This might be why labor force participation loses its statistical significance and why length of residence gains its statistical significance in Equation 3 with an introduction of the age variable.

In conclusion, eight of the ten hypotheses for predicting individual community involvement are supported by the data, and there are several implications drawn from individual-level analysis. First, the rational choice explanation of individual community involvement based on the expectation of personal benefits is supported by the data, but is limited in its predicting power as evidenced by the low value of adjusted R square (.07).

Second, the social relation argument based on the embeddedness perspective and social capital theory is a crucial concept for understanding individual community involvement behavior, as demonstrated by the substantially stronger effect of local ties relative to the effects of other independent variables. Based on social capital theory and the embeddedness perspective, there is merit in the social relation argument beyond the individual-level conceptualization of the community involvement phenomenon. Because local ties represent community-based relations, analysis of community-level processes is deemed appropriate.

In fact, another implication of the individual-level analysis involves the emergence of place as a critical dimension for understanding individual community involvement. The potential impact of place is worth exploring given how community involvement is defined and the powerful effect of local ties on community involvement. Moreover, results of our data analysis show that community population, as an indicator of place characteristic, is significantly related with individual community involvement. At the same time, local church attendance and length of residence also reflect the embeddedness of individuals in local social life. Considering the embeddedness of individual thoughts and actions in local social life, it is appropriate to examine place-based social relations as a structural characteristic. Structural characteristics not only would affect community members equally but also would affect community-level outcomes, which, in turn, influence community members. If so, social relational characteristics of a community such as density of acquaintanceships and

residential stability would influence the level of community involvement for a community as a whole, which would determine the extent of improvement of the community's common good, eventually affecting the individual quality of everyday life.

Finally, age remains an intriguing factor in terms of its effect on the dependent variable. As mentioned previously, the effect of age is interesting in at least two ways that actually are related to one another. First, age is significantly intercorrelated with other predictor variables that concern individual traits, reflecting that age may serve as a confounding variable or a stratifying factor. Second, the correlation coefficient for the relationship between age and individual community involvement is negative while regression analysis reveals a positive relationship. Whereas one interpretation is that the relationship is positive when controlling for other variables, another possibility is the nonlinear relationship between age and individual community involvement. This uncertainty involved with the effect of age and the data suggestive of age-stratification lead to a conclusion that age group-level analysis would reveal the presence or the absence of the effect of age group on age group community involvement.

Community-Level analysis

Table 6 contains intercorrelations among all community-level variables. All of the variables are significantly correlated with one another. Consistent with the hypotheses, density of acquaintanceships, residential stability and community population aging and are positively correlated with community-level community involvement ($r=.59$, $r=.61$, and $r=.57$, respectively). Community population is negatively associated with community-level community involvement ($r=-.39$), suggesting the positive effect of small population size on the extent of community involvement in a community. Community financial capital is positively related

Table 6. Correlations among Study Variables for Community-Level Analysis (n=114)

Variable		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Community-Level Community Involvement	1.00						
2	Community Population (Log)	-.39**	1.00					
3	Community Financial Capital	-.41**	.48**	1.00				
4	Community Human Capital	-.35**	.71**	.52**	1.00			
5	Density of Acquaintanceships	.59**	-.32**	-.41**	-.36**	1.00		
6	Residential Stability	.61**	-.34**	-.61**	-.56**	.64**	1.00	
7	Community Population Aging	.57**	-.34**	-.66**	-.36**	.46**	.64**	1.00

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

with community human capital ($r=.52$), and both of the variables are strongly and positively correlated with community population ($r=.71$ and $r=.48$, respectively). This reflects lower levels of financial and human resources in smaller communities.

Table 7 summarizes the results of regression analysis involving the prediction of community involvement at the community level. Equation 1 includes density of acquaintanceships and residential stability as independent variables, and both of their effects are significant at p-values less than .01, with coefficients of .29 and .45, respectively. The results are consistent with the hypotheses. According to the results, the higher the density of acquaintanceships in a community, the more involved the community is with community projects. Higher residential stability also is associated with higher levels of community involvement. As for the control variables, a community's population size is found to be negatively associated with community-level community involvement as indicated by the statistically significant coefficient of -.32. It suggests that larger communities have lower levels of community involvement. The effects of both community financial capital and community human capital are not significant. The relatively high value of adjusted R square of .46 for Equation 1 reflects the explanatory power of the proposed predictors.

In addition to density of acquaintanceships and residential stability, community population aging is introduced in Equation 2. As hypothesized, community population aging is significantly and positively related with community involvement, with a coefficient of .31. This means that communities with a higher proportion of elderly residents tend to have a higher level of resident involvement in the community as a whole. The significant effects of density of acquaintanceships and residential stability are sustained even after introducing community population aging. Equation 2 yields a higher adjusted R square value of .50 than in Equation 1, with a statistically significant change in F value of 9.6.

Table 7. Regression Coefficients for Models Predicting Community-Level Community Involvement (n=114)

Independent Variable	Equation 1		Equation 2	
	Beta	t-value	Beta	t-value
Community Population (Log)	-.32	-3.0**	-.28	-2.8**
Community Financial Capital	.03	.3	.16	1.6
Community Human Capital	.22	1.9	.16	1.4
Density of Acquaintanceships	.29	3.2**	.28	3.1**
Residential Stability	.45	4.0**	.33	2.8**
Community Population Aging	-		.31	3.1**
Adjusted R Square	.46**		.50**	
F Change	20.2**		9.6**	

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Community-level regression analysis shows that the data support all three hypotheses predicting community-level community involvement. The finding about the positive effect of community population aging leads one to speculate that it might be due to older people being involved more actively than younger people in community projects. This speculation is also supported by the result of regression analysis at the individual level, which shows a positive effect of age on individual community involvement. Subsequent analysis at the age group level is expected to clarify further the mechanism of the positive effect of community population aging.

Age Group-Level Analysis

Intercorrelations among non-categorical variables for age group-level analysis are shown in Table 8. The prediction for the relationship between age group community involvement and age group local ties is supported by the statistically significant, positive correlation coefficient ($r=.47$, significant at p -value less than .01). The prediction regarding age group length of residence, however, is not supported based on the non-significant correlation with age group involvement. Age group length of residence, which is not significantly correlated with age group community involvement, is significantly correlated with age group local ties with a correlation coefficient of .17. Age group financial capital has a significant relationship with age group community involvement ($r=.19$, significant at p -value less than .01) whereas age group human capital is not significantly correlated with age group involvement.

Table 8. Correlations among Study Variables for Age Group-Level Analysis

Variables		1	2	3	4	5
1	Age Group Community Involvement	1.00				
2	Age Group Financial Capital	.19**	1.00			
3	Age Group Human Capital	.04	.59**	1.00		
4	Age Group Local Ties	.47**	.02	-.17**	1.00	
5	Age Group Length of Residence	-.09	-.77**	-.59**	.17**	1.00

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Effects of age group on community involvement from analysis of covariance are displayed in Table 9. Analysis of covariance is used instead of multiple regression analysis due to the inclusion of categorical variables in the equations in addition to covariates. Categorical variables included are age group (Young Group, Young-Old Group, and Old-Old Group) and community type (Ruraltown, Smallcity, and Metrocity). First, Equation 1 is to determine whether or not age group community involvement varies by age group. As hypothesized, age group is shown to have a significant influence on age group community involvement based on the significant Eta squared (.08).

Table 9. Effects of Age Group on Community Involvement from Analysis of Covariance (n=342)

Independent Variable	Equation 1		Equation 2		Equation 3	
	Eta	F	Eta	F	Eta	F
	Squared		Squared		Squared	
Age Group Financial Capital	.01	3.6	.00	.5	.00	.0
Age Group Human Capital	.01	2.3	.00	.8	.04	13.0**
Age Group	.08	15.1**	.01	1.8	.02	3.3*
Community Type	-		.09	15.9**	.13	25.8**
Age Group*Community Type	-		.01	.6	-	
Age Group Local Ties	-		-		.18	70.5**
Age Group Length of Residence	-		-		.01	3.1
Adjusted R Square	.11		.18		.39	

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

As a next step, both age group and community type are included in Equation 2 along with an the interaction term between the 2 variables. As predicted, age group community involvement varies significantly depending on community type. The significance of the age group effect, however, disappears in Equation 2, most likely due to multicollinearity. In addition, no significant interaction effect is found. This means that the age group's effect on age group involvement does not vary by community type.

Table 10 displays the results of independent sample t-tests comparing the means of age group community involvement levels between age groups. Comparisons show that the Old-Old Group has the lowest mean (-.86) and the Young Group has the highest (.42), with the mean of the Young-Old Group (.07) higher than the Old-Old and lower than the Young. Independent sample t-tests reveal that the Old-Old Group's level of community involvement is statistically different from the levels of the Young-Old Group as well as the Young Group. Differences in the levels of community involvement between the Young-Old Group and the Young Group, on the other hand, are not statistically significant.

Table 10. Comparisons of Age Group Community Involvement Levels Between Age Groups

T Value	Old-Old Group Mean	Young-Old Group Mean	Young Group Mean
-4.6**	-.86	.07	-
-5.6**	-.86	-	.42
-1.6	-	.07	.42

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Comparing the means of age group community involvement between community types (see Table 11) reveals that there is no statistical difference in the level of age group community involvement between Smallcities and Metrocities (-1.62 and -1.15, respectively). However, the differences between Ruraltowns (.08) and both Smallcities (-1.62) and Metrocities (-1.15) are significant.

Table 11. Comparisons of Age Group Community Involvement Levels Between Community Types

T Value	Ruraltown Mean	Smallcity Mean	Metrocity Mean
5.6**	.08	-1.62	-
2.6**	.08	-	-1.15
-.8	-	-1.62	-1.15

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

The next model (Equation 3) introduces another independent variable, age group local ties, whose effect on age group community involvement is statistically significant (Eta squared value of .18). The mean level of community involvement for age groups with a high level of local ties (greater than the median) is .52 whereas the same for age groups with a lower level of local ties is -.80. These results are consistent with the proposed hypothesis that the amount of age group local ties is positively related with an age group's level of community involvement. The hypothesis involving age group length of residence is not supported by the data as indicated by the non-significant value of Eta squared. The significant Eta squared value for the effect of age group human capital, contrary to the results of

Equations 1 and 2, may be due to multicollinearity concerning the variable's high correlation with age group length of residence. The adjusted R square value increases markedly from .18 for Equation 2 to .39 for Equation 3, indicating the contribution of age group local ties when predicting the dependent variable.

Overall, three of the four hypotheses for age group community involvement are supported by the data. One of the interesting findings concerns the effect of age group and its implication on the positive effect of community population aging. If community involvement varies by age group, the fact that the Old-Old Groups have the lowest level of community involvement makes one wonder how community population aging is positively related with community involvement at the community level. How the higher proportion of elderly residents in a community is positively associated with a more actively involved community is uncertain. This issue as well as implications of the community and age group level findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical arguments and findings of this dissertation strongly support the continued focus on social relations within the frameworks of social capital theory, the embeddedness perspective, and the age-stratification perspective in understanding the phenomenon of community involvement. This chapter examines some of the implications of these findings on a number of different issues revolving around major research questions for the present study: the significance of locality-based social relations, place, and age stratification. The chapter begins with a brief summary of the dissertation.

Major research objectives of the study were to identify 1) what factors cause individuals to be involved in their community work, 2) what factors result in differences in the level of community involvement by different communities, 3) what factors explain age group differences in the level of community involvement, and 4) the implications of the findings for policy issues. The major theoretical perspectives utilized are rational choice theory, social capital theory, the embeddedness perspective and the age-stratification perspective. Rational choice theory was used to explain how the notion of personal benefits may explain individual community involvement. Social capital theory also helped illustrate how social relations as individual and group resources would facilitate community involvement for an individual as well as a group. Social capital theory makes it possible to conceptualize that place-based social relations as community resources would facilitate community organization. Next, the age-stratification perspective was employed to consider the effect of age stratification on community involvement. Drawing from social capital theory, place-based social ties maintained by a certain age group can be conceptualized as resources for the age group, possibly beneficial for the age group's integration into the community, which would influence how actively the age group is involved in community-based projects. A review of empirical studies revealed the scarcity

of research involving the concept of social relations at the community and age group levels while general support was found for the individual-level explanation of community involvement based on the concept of personal benefits.

Data from a mail survey completed by 13,692 residents from 99 rural towns, 11 small cities, and 4 metropolitan areas in Iowa were used to conduct multiple regression analyses as well as analysis of covariance to identify factors that are associated with community involvement at the individual, community, and age group levels. Seventeen hypotheses were proposed and fourteen were supported by the data. While five of the six hypotheses relating to the personal benefit argument were supported by the data, they were found to be limited in their explanatory power.

Based on both theoretical and empirical grounds, it became apparent that the effects of local ties, place, and age deserved closer examination. What the aspects of local ties, place, and age have in common is the fact that they all involve some forms of shared experiences as per social capital theory and the age-stratification perspective. The effects of local ties, place, and age on individual community involvement are largely the effects of the social context in which shared experiences occur. Because of ongoing social relations in the shared context, certain group properties tend to emerge. Group properties for communities or age groups and their relationships with community involvement were the main focus of the analysis. Implications of the findings concerning the community- and age group-level processes are explained below.

Density of Acquaintanceships and Community-Level Community Involvement

Density of acquaintanceships, residential stability, and community populating aging are found to explain why some communities are better mobilized than other communities. According to the results, those communities where residents know a large proportion of fellow residents would be mobilized

relatively easily since a greater proportion of residents would participate in a production of public goods.

Positive effects of social relations on community involvement at the individual-, community-, and age group-levels that are found in the present analysis may reflect the six mechanisms involving social relations presented in Chapter 2. The mechanisms are based on the propositions of social capital theory and the embeddedness perspective. The first mechanism focuses on the opportunity or accessibility aspect of social relations at the individual level. The second concerns the effect of norms of reciprocity on individuals. The third depends on the amount of obligations and expectations held by members in a group. The fourth relies on norms and effective sanctions in a group. Another mechanism is through common group identity. The sixth mechanism is found in the function of social relations as information channels. Although each of these mechanisms is not tested in the current research, the findings in the present analysis broadly support the benefits of social relations on individual-, community-, and age group-level community involvement.

Based on Granovetter's (1985) embeddedness argument, the strong predicting power of individual local ties, density of acquaintanceship, and age group local ties indicates that community involvement of individuals is embedded in the structure of their social relations within their community. Coleman's (1988) notion of a closure of social networks is also relevant here in that a high density of acquaintanceships within a community tends to approximate a closed structure within the geographic boundary of the community. Such a closed structure is important for producing and maintaining effective norms and sanctions within a group, leading community members to work for the public good.

Accordingly, the density aspect of the relational structure is advantageous as it helps with disseminating information (Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993) within a community. As information is likely to inhere in social ties (Coleman 1988), information about community projects as well as people's reputations can flow

through local ties and be diffused to community residents. If so, the greater the proportion of residents known per resident, the more efficient is the diffusion of information about community projects and therefore the more residents likely to know about and participate in the projects. Granovetter's (1973) thesis about the strength of weak ties is supported by the present finding because the present study has focused on weak ties by measuring density of acquaintanceships based on the proportion or number of acquaintances in a community.

Finally, the finding that density of acquaintanceships affects community involvement shows how the structural aspect of place-based social relations alone can predict positive community-level outcomes, as Freudenburg (1986) and Sampson (1991) were able to demonstrate in their studies. Freudenburg (1986) associated the density of acquaintanceship with the consequences involving control of deviance, socialization of the young, and care of the community's weaker members. Sampson (1991) linked the density of local friendship/acquaintanceship ties with social cohesion in a neighborhood. The present analysis has found active community involvement to be another beneficial consequence of acquaintanceship density.

Residential Stability and Community-Level Community Involvement

The finding concerning the positive effect of residential stability is meaningful from the social capital and embeddedness perspectives. Ongoing social relationships in a shared environment over time are required to have expectations and obligations accumulated among residents in a community, to have norms and sanctions affect resident involvement, and to share group identity. In communities where average length of residence is high, each resident would have known many other residents, and hence more opportunities to be subject to group expectations and group identity.

Population Aging and Community-Level Community Involvement

The third finding at the community level is that there is a positive association between community population aging and community-level community involvement. This means that communities with a higher percentage of residents who are 75 years old or older are more likely to be successful in mobilizing their residents for community projects. The logic behind the hypothesized relationship between community population aging and community involvement stemmed from the fact that older generations are more politically involved compared to younger ones in the United States (Miller and Shanks 1996). Communities that can mobilize for community projects more easily are thought to have a larger proportion of active community members. When hypothesizing the positive relationship between the proportion of elderly population and community-level community involvement, elderly individuals who would be at least 75 years of age were thought to be more actively involved than younger generations. The hypothesis is supported by the data, but the data show that elderly people were not the more actively involved segment of the population. When the levels of community involvement among the three age groups are compared, Old-Old Groups (75 years of age or older) have a substantially lower level of community involvement on average compared to other younger age groups. Hence, the positive effect of community population aging on community-level community involvement warrants further investigation.

Apparently, those who were 75 years of age or over did not influence a community-level community involvement level through their higher level of participation. Some other community-level processes must be at work. It can be argued that the presence of elderly community members represents an embodied form of cultural capital, as described by Pierre Bourdieu (1986). The embodied state of cultural capital refers to the form of "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (Bourdieu 1986:243-244), which can be transmitted

domestically to younger generations and sanctioned by the educational system. Whereas Bourdieu refers to a familial setting or within a class for the transmission of cultural capital, one may apply the concept to a community setting to understand the process whereby older community members as cultural capital themselves transmit cultural capital to younger members through socialization of the young.

Place and Community-Level Community Involvement

A community's population size is found to be negatively related with community involvement, showing that smaller size communities have higher levels of participation in community projects than do larger ones. The relationship between the size of a community and a community's degree of community involvement may exist for many reasons, including the presence of more informal helping behavior in less urbanized places (Sampson 1991) or the greater receptiveness to volunteering in small, rural places (Smith 1994). Another plausible explanation is that community involvement needs of different size communities do not increase in direct proportion to the number of residents. If a project in a rural town with 1,000 residents live requires 100 participants, 10 percent of the town's population is required. The same project in a metropolitan city with a population of 100,000 may also require 100 participants, which is only .001 of a percent of its residents, to be involved to complete the project.

Age Group and Age Group Community Involvement

Results show that age group community involvement varies significantly by age group, supporting the basic assumptions of the age-stratification perspective that people and people's roles are stratified by age. The finding of an age group effect is important not only because it validates age group-level

analysis but also because previous studies either found no significant effect of age or reported inconsistent findings with regard to age effect. In terms of community involvement, the data show that Old-Old Groups were significantly different from the other two groups, which did not differ significantly. Young Groups (55 years of age or younger) are found to be the most active and Old-Old Groups (75 and over) the least active. This pattern does not coincide with Miller and Shanks' (1996) finding of generational differences in voting.

Community Type and Age Group Community Involvement

Age group's effect on age group community involvement does not vary by community type, but age group community involvement is found to vary significantly depending on community type, demonstrating the effect of place. A comparison of means of age group involvement levels for Ruraltown, Smallcity, and Metrocity indicates that Ruraltowns had the highest level of age group involvement and that Metrocities had the lowest level. Based on this finding, Old-Old Groups in Ruraltowns would be involved more actively than their counterparts in Smallcity or Metrocity. Likewise, the Young-Old and the Young in Ruraltowns generally would have a higher level of community involvement compared to their respective counterparts in Smallcities or Metrocities.

The effect of place on age group community involvement demonstrates how aging experiences are grounded in place, differentiating how people age and what the aged are expected to do.

Age Group Local Ties and Age Group Community Involvement

Age group community involvement is found to be positively affected by age group local ties. In other words, an age group with extensive local ties would have a higher proportion of group members involved in locality projects than

would other age groups with less extensive ties. Such patterns can be interpreted in at least two different ways. First, extensive local ties held by an age group can be used to channel whatever needs to be diffused, as described by Granovetter (1973) and Coleman (1988). Through local ties held by an age group, for example, information about community projects can be diffused to the members of the age group. Members of an age group, if connected to many other community members - not only those from the same age group but also from other age groups - are likely to learn about community projects relatively quickly and therefore are more likely to participate in them. If an age group holds extensive local ties, such ties will be more than just within the same age group, connecting to other age group members in the locality and increasing the chances of being asked to participate in community work.

Second, if local ties held by age group members become extensive enough to include ties with residents who are not age peers, the age group has a greater likelihood of being exposed to and/or helping shape a community's norms and community-related identity beyond age group-based identity. Under these circumstances, a larger proportion of members in the age group would be inclined to collaborate on community work.

If the amount of local ties for an age group is minimal, a majority of such ties is likely to be made up of age group peers, given age-based interactional patterns and age segregation as noted by the age-stratification perspective. Norms existing within the age group may operate to influence the attitudes as well as behaviors of age group members more than community-based norms, either encouraging and discouraging age group members from participating in community projects.

Conclusions

While the study demonstrated the importance of local ties, place, and age group in understanding the phenomenon of community involvement, contributions attributable to the results of the present study are in the areas of empirical knowledge, method, and policy.

One of the contributions of the study concerns the finding that community population aging has a positive effect on community-level community involvement. The finding demonstrates the positive influence of elderly community members on community improvement efforts. Although a further explanation is needed with regard to the process of elderly influence in community settings, the results of this study can be used to revisit the two opposite views regarding the elderly with one being politically active and the other being the dependents of society.

The present study may contribute to the community literature by demonstrating the usefulness of age group-level analysis within a community context. For example, conceptualizing social capital as an age group property can be useful for identifying potential resources held by different age groups in a community. Findings pertaining to age group characteristics and outcome can be useful not only for understanding age group differences but also for predicting effects of age-based programs and policies. Especially given the varying degrees of population aging in communities, age-stratified roles and people, and various age-based policies, age group-level analysis may yield useful discoveries.

The present findings suggest several policy implications. On a community level, communities can tap older segments of their population for community projects. Despite the high rate of participation of elderly population in the most basic act of civic duty (i.e., voting), their current level of community involvement compared to the younger generations is low. Although the lower participation

rate of the elderly may be due to factors such as health status or financial well-being, it may be that the size of their social ties partially explains their low involvement. The finding about the positive relationship between age group local ties and age group community involvement can be highlighted to argue for efforts to create more opportunities for social interactions within a community and across age groups. Different age groups can meet through opportunities such as intergenerational programs. At the same time, cultural or other structural barriers prohibiting older community members can be lowered or removed through education about the contributions elderly residents have made for community development in the past. On a national level, various policies relating to elderly Americans usually target disadvantaged elderly people. The Older Americans Act, for example, can broaden the scope of the programs beyond the low-income elderly. In the Foster Grandparent Program, people who are 60 and over help children with disabilities and special needs, teen parents and their children, and provide literacy assistance. Such a program can expand to those other than low-income elderly by recruiting volunteers who are willing to work without being paid. The same can be done with the Senior Companion program, which currently provides volunteers with reimbursement for transportation, meals, and so on. The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is a program that may expand significantly among the more educated and financially well-to-do elderly. Volunteers in this program work a few to over 40 hours a week in organizations such as hospitals or youth recreation centers, using their skills and experiences. This program is not limited to low-income elderly and therefore can utilize many young-old volunteers in a community.

One of the limitations of the present study is the fact that the major purpose of data collection was not to analyze age groups with a focus on older age groups. For purposes of the present study, an age-stratified sample would have improved the generalizability of the present findings. Notwithstanding, the data used are based on a large-scale representative sample in the state of Iowa

and provide a rare opportunity to examine elderly and nonelderly age groups in the context of their geographic community.

As mentioned previously, directions for future research include further investigation of the mechanism in which community population aging influences community-level outcome. In addition, causal relationships among variables can be examined more closely, using other analytic methods such as path analysis or structural equation modeling. Use of hierarchical linear modeling would also prove useful for confirming the present findings by performing a multilevel analysis involving individual-, age group-, and community-level predictors.

Currently in the United States, the general population is becoming less involved in civic affairs (Putnam 1995), government is weakening its commitment to establishing social programs, and the number and proportion of elderly population are on the rise. It is imperative that the social and cultural capital of the elderly be tapped to strengthen civic culture, particularly in light of decreasing government assistance. Communities may strengthen by solving community problems themselves and by communicating the needs of the communities to the government more effectively. More attempts need to be made to address how society can draw more effectively on the elderly population to meet community needs and to sustain civic culture.

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